GLIMPSES OF BENGAL LIFE

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STRAY NOTES ON SOME BENGALI BALLADS
MINACHETAN OR THE SONG OF GORAKSANATH
ON CHANDIDAS
CHAITANYA'S DESERTION OF NADIA
HUMOUR IN OLD BENGALI POETRY

Being Lectures delivered to the Calcutta University in 1915 (with a Supplement)

By

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Like a plant's offering of
its tribute of small flowers to the grave-yard
these humble pages are dedicated
to the memory of the revered dead—
whose flag we are lovingly carrying, each
according to his capacity, in the cause
of our Alma Mater—need I name

SIR ASUTOSH?

PREFACE

The lectures embodied in the present volume were delivered by me to the Calcutta University so far back as the year 1915.

Since that time I came in possession of a large mass of material which necessitated a thorough revision of the lectures—but as I had not then sufficient spare time at my command, their publication was kept in abeyance all this while. It was about the middle of the last year when I took up the work again and not only revised the lectures in a thorough manner, but in some cases added supplementary notes to make them up-to-date. The last chapter on the *Karchā* of Govindadas is an addition of this kind.

When Pandit Jaygopal Goswami of Santipur—a direct descendant of the great Vaisnav apostle Advaitacharyya, published the Karchā in 1895, a few orthodox Vaisnavas took exception to the first fifty pages of the printed book and alleged them to have been forged by the Pandit. This was indignantly refuted by the venerable old Brahmin who was then verging on fourscore. Soon after some undoubted evidence presented itself in an unexpected manner, proving beyond all contention the charge to be

utterly unfounded, but the Pandit was not then alive to observe this triumph of truth. For a long time the hostile camp was silent, as the evidence of some newly discovered old manuscripts was found to be conclusive on the point.

A few orthodox Vaisnavas have again come forward after about thirty years to assail the authenticity of the Karchā. Their only ground of objection seems to be that the account given in this book is not always in agreement with that of some other biographies which they consider to be their scriptures. But the historian may not regard their "holy-writ" as unerring, and hence they have taken umbrage at my historical findings which are not always congenial to their orthodox conventions. The Karchā is a simple record of the emotional felicities and trances of the divine man of Nadia and does not give that sectarian character which the latter-day Vaisnava theology has obviously ascribed to him. It was besides written by a man on the spot—an advantage which could not be claimed by the most authoritative Vaisnava biographies such as Charitamrita and Chaitanya Bhagavata written long after he had passed away from the world. Where the Karchā disagrees with the latter, in the matter of details, I have believed in its statements in preference to 'the holy-writ' of the orthodox school—an act which has exasperated some of its members. None of the

supernatural tales abounding in the other biographies of Chaitanya find a place in the simple narration of the faithful attendant of Chaitanya. These are some of the reasons which have led a few men to be so hostile towards the *Karchā*.

I find it necessary to give here all facts relating to the *Karchā*—for if they be not put on record now, they would surely be lost to the after generations, and the orthodox element might be rampant again assailing on flimsy grounds the authenticity of a great work which I consider to be the most reliable historical account of the life of the Master, though its scope is limited to a period of less than two years.

These lectures of mine, I presume, will throw some light on many points connected with the social, political and religious history of Bengal. I beg to draw the attention of my readers particularly to the system of espionage that was prevalent in Bengal in the eighteenth century given on pages 32-37 and to the truthful character and loyalty of the Bengali people as shown in the legendary account of Harihar Baity (pp. 25-26). I also draw attention to the lofty character of Gorakshanath as conceived by the Bengali peasants (pp. 85-118).

CONTENTS

GLIMPSES OF BENGAL LIFE

During the Hindu and Muhammadan Periods

CHAPTER I

Notes on administration.

The Hindu Rajas of the 10th and 11th centuries—a period immediately preceding the Muhammadan invasion—were no doubt autocratic, but an element of popular voice in administration was not altogether wanting. The election of Gopal to the throne of Gour by the unanimous voice of the people, who were suffering from anarchy and oppression, characterised in copper plate inscriptions as '*Matsanyaya*' is an event to which attention has rightly been drawn by recent scholars. In the songs of Manika Chandra we find, that the prime minister had the sole charge of administration and the king seldom meddled with his procedure, though oftentimes it was high-handed. In a Dharmamangal poem we find that the king sometimes consulted his twelve sub-lords known as the

"*Bāra Bhuiāns*," when any political crisis disturbed or threatened the safety of the kingdom. In the songs of Gopi Chandra we find that the *rāyats* did not tacitly submit to oppression, but when it became intolerable they combined under the guidance of the '*Moral*' or the chief *rāyat*, and devised plans to remedy their grievances. When they dared not break into open revolt, they performed the '*abhichara*' rites in order to upset the rule which pressed heavily on them.[1] In the Gopi Chandra songs when Khetu was appointed to rule the kingdom during the absence of the Raja for twelve years, the *rayats* strongly opposed the arrangement, and many declamatory speeches were made in the spirit of stubborn resistance. One of the assembly abused Khetu as a low-born upstart and said that he would keep the payment of twelve years' rent in abeyance and pay the sum to

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[1] In 'Manik Chandra Rajār gān,' published by Grierson in the Asiatic Society's Journal (1878 A. D) the *abhichāra*, said to have been performed by the *rāyats*, consisted of the following rites. Some *bel* fruits, incense and vermilion were put together in an earthen pot. A number of chickens and geese were placed in a cage. These with some goats carried on a bamboo-pole, were brought to the banks of the Ganges. On a certain Sunday the *rāyats* fasted. They worshipped Dharma before whom the goats were sacrificed; the chickens and the geese were dedicated to the Ganges. The incense and vermilion were burnt on her bank. A long reed, pressed by a stick, by mystic rites turned into a snake which stung the king. On Monday he got fever, on Tuesday he became bed-ridden and on Wednesday he could neither eat nor drink.

Gopi Chand on his return, but by no means submit to the rule of 'the slave Khetu.' In the Mymensing ballads (Surat Jamal) we find the people of Baniachang muster strong and attack the palace of their chief led by prince Jamal, being unable to bear the oppression of the former. In the ballad of Malua, the kinsmen of the heroine became so daring as to seize the body of the Dewan Saheb himself and assault his boatmen, of course under gravely provoking circumstances. There was, therefore, undoubtedly a democratic element in the political atmosphere of Bengal which is clearly in evidence from these stray cases.

Mukundarām mentions the oppressions of Muhamad Sharif, the Collector of Government revenues of Pergana Selimabad in the 16th century. One may be prone to believe that under Muhammadan rule such oppression of Hindu *rayats* was quite conceivable, as the alien rulers were sometimes indifferent to the miseries caused to the Hindus by administrative rigour; but when we read of the sufferings of the poor under the regime of Rājā Manik Chandra who ruled in the 11th century, we are reminded that the chief cause of the oppression of the people in this country has always been the weakness of a sovereign, be he a Hindu or a Muhammadan, and the high-handedness of his officers. The prime minister of Rājā Manik Chandra is described as a man

who hailed from Eastern Bengal—"with a long flowing beard." This man was worse than Muhamad Sharif of Mukundarām's description. He made the poor people "sell their ploughs, yokes, shares and all" and they were compelled to "sell even their babies who subsisted on mother's milk, in order to meet his growing demand for rent."[1]

If the minister happened to be good, the case was very different. The sovereign listened to the counsel of the prime minister with absolute confidence, and was ever ready to spend money for charity and for a good cause, if only the man in office brought matters to his notice. Muhamad Sharif, the Dihidar, and the East Bengal minister of Rājā Manik Chandra are not the only figures who appear in the old Bengali literature as oppressors of people. We have the familiar figure of the Hindu minister, Mahamad, popularly known as Mahudhya, of the court of King Dharmapal in the 10th century, whose mal-administration and wickedness became proverbial. The wicked counsels which he gave to his sovereign, who was too weak to resist them, put Lau Sen, the king's nephew to infinite trouble; and the stratagem with which the minister entrapped innocent Harihar Baiti for speaking the unvarnished

[1] "লাঙ্গল বেচায়, জোয়াল বেচায় আরও বেচায় ফাল।
খাজনার তাপত বেচায় দুধের ছাওয়াল ॥"

truth in the king's court, is characteristic of some of the methods of oppression used in olden times by the infuriated man in power. Of course these tales are in many cases legendary and should not be used as historical evidence, but we should more bear in mind the spirit of the poems than the events and legends described in them. Through romance and exaggerations, through unrestrained imagination and distortion of facts, rustic literature never fails to create a vivid impression of the real state of the country. The people describe their joys, their sorrows, their ideas and their grievances in unfailingly convincing language, though the incidents described may be often incredible. Hence the picture of administration depicted by them has certainly some elements of truth and often gives a better idea of the state of things than the more reliable evidence of the copperplate inscriptions, full of enthusiastic panegyrics of a monarch by his court-poets.

That the country was immensely rich in the Hindu Period is indicated by the incidental descriptions to be found in the songs of Maināmati. It is said that each *rayat* "trod his own path" in order to reach the main road. Even maid-servants did not wear cotton *sadi* but wore silk. The children of *rayats* played with golden balls, the widows used silver vessels and in many houses there were golden tumblers from which

people drank water. People were so rich that an ordinary merchant used apparels worn by a king. The general rate of a day labourer's wage was Rs. 6 per day. Ordinary artisans and retail dealers had horses and elephants in their stables. The pitcher which Queen Maināmati took in hand in order to bring water from the Ganges was inlaid with diamonds and its value was a lac of rupees. The shell-bracelets worn by the queen were also of the same value. Certainly the pictures are often exaggerated but they give us a rough idea of the wealth of the people, though we may not credit some points as true. In the descriptions of aristocratic houses in old Bengali poems we often find that rich men and women used to sit on golden couches, resting their feet on silver foot-stools. Bejoy Gupta, the celebrated poet who sang of Manasā Devi and flourished in the 16th century, describes a marriage procession of one of the mercantile communities; it is said that there were 700 palanquins of gold and silver and 70 stately golden couches in the procession, not to speak of hundreds of other articles indicating the pomp and wealth which were displayed on the occasion. Three thousand men were employed to light bonfires alone.[1] In many other poems we

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[1] "অত্যধিক বল চাঁদের কি কব অধিক।
তিন শত চলিয়াছে গন্ধ বণিক॥"

meet with similar descriptions of the festivities of the merchants. That these accounts did not go very far beyond the truth, is evidenced by the description of a procession to be found in a Bengali work called the Babu Vilasa written by Pramatha Nath Sarma in 1810. This description

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চৌদ্দ শত চলিয়াছে কুলীন স্বজন।
তিন শত ভাট চলে নয় শত ব্রাহ্মণ ॥
শুক্ল বস্ত্র পরিধান মাথায় ফুলের ডালি।
বিয়া দেখ্‌তে চলিয়াছে নয় শত মালী ॥
তের শত গোবর পাইক মাথায় সবার বোঝা।
দুই শত চলিয়াছে গাড়ুড়িয়া ওঝা ॥
পট্ট বস্ত্র পরিধান বড় দেখি শোভা।
এক চাপে চলিয়াছে শত শত ধোপা ॥
সারি দিয়া কটক চলিছে হাতা হাতি।
বার শত যোগী চলে তের শত তাঁতি ॥
চারি শত কুমার চলিল হরষিতে।
কাছে কাছে চলিয়াছে শতেক নাপিতে ॥
চম্পক নগরের রাজা উজানীতে গেলা।
সাত শত চলিয়াছে সোনা রূপার দোলা ॥
সাজিল বণিক চাঁদ নাহি ওর পার।
নিরালম্ব লোক চলে হাজার হাজার ॥
তিন হাজার চলিয়াছে বিদ্যুৎ বাজিকর।
শত শত চলিয়াছে প্রধান শ্রুতিধর ॥
চম্পক নগরের লোক নানা ধনে রঙ্গ।
সত্তর খানা চলিয়াছে সোনার পালঙ্ক।
অতি বড় শব্দ শুনি যেন বহে ঝড়।
নয় শত কাওয়ালি চলে তের শত নর ॥
মহাশব্দে বাদ্য বাজে শুনি বড় রঙ্গ।
দুই হাজার ঢাক চলে হাজার মৃদঙ্গ ॥
চলিল চাকর কটক করি পরিপাটি।
হাতে করে আন্‌তে পারে উজানের মাটী ॥

is not at all exaggerated and shows what an extraordinary amount of money was used to be spent on processions by rich men. Twenty years ago the merchants of Dacca used to spend great sums on rival Janmastami processions. The stately show of elephants and horses with golden *howdahs* and caparisons on their backs on such occasions made a great impression on the spectators. Yet this was but a poor relic of the grandeur which characterised the festivities of the merchants of the good old age, when they carried on trade with the whole world and earned immense wealth.

The bane of the accumulation of wealth by trade is the creation of that inequality in communities which, while raising a class of people to the summit of good fortune, throws others into the very pit of want and pecuniary distress. The life of the poor described by Mukundaram is well known. What more distressing picture can be imagined than that of Phullora who spent day together without any food and wore deer skin or bark and lived in a wretched cot where posts of ricinus broke at every gust of wind; when the rain came, the little compound and the cottage were flooded, and the husband and wife lived on the fruits of *baichi* for weeks together. They spent many days without any food at all. Though the pictures drawn by the poet may be imaginary, yet the scenes of poverty are

described in such a realistic way and in such a forcible manner that we have no doubt that they represent the actual life of the poor in his time. This was of course the state of things in the 16th century, but similar scenes were not wanting even in the 10th century—when the *rayats* are described as selling their ploughing implements under mal-administration, when 'it is said' vast areas of fertile land looked like waste lands, as the people were too poor to purchase bullocks and ploughs to bring them under cultivation.

Purity of domestic life.

The purity of the domestic life of the Hindus is a point which will at once strike the reader of the old Bengali literature. We need not speak of the great virtues of women described therein. We cannot conceive of any literature in which the chastity of women and the purity of their lives have formed the subject of such animated panegyric as is found in our literature. What more illustrious examples of female purity and self-sacrifice are to be found in any literature than those of Behula—the devoted bride of Lakshindara, of Ranja—the wife of Karna Sen, of Khullana—the young wife of Dhanapati? The Mymensing ballads are full of many great figures of this type shewing the blossoming points of womanly virtues. What more edifying and lovely pictures can we conceive than of Malua, Kamala, Madina, Chandravati,

Sakhina and Sunai? Though rustic poets have sung of them, though the descriptions often want the brilliant imageries, scholarly touches and the literary grace and embellishment of the Sanskrit poets, they shew in their crude forms the really virtuous and self-sacrificing womankind, whose parallel it will be difficult to find in the literature of any country outside India. Is not Phullara, clad in deer skin,—her condition verging on starvation, a more glorious character than many women born and brought up under luckier circumstances, as described in ordinary romances? Though she does not hold a soliloquy on love nor try to convince her lover of her romantic sentiments by enthusiastic speeches in the best of style, yet her brief words to her husband when Chandi in disguise tries to spot him indirectly as unfaithful, shew the depth and profoundness of her love, which was no fleeting sentiment with her but "her whole existence." On Behula, Ranja and others we need not dwell at large. In the crude language of the rustics which is dear to us because they breathe the country-air, these characters are drawn with ineffaceable colour, and if we have no respect for them because they are not written in the elegant Bengali of the present day, it is because we are unable to distinguish between gold and its dross. True, the sacredness of a wife's relation to her husband has formed the

main subject of the old Bengali poems, but the moral virtues are none the less emphasised in them. We find in the Dharmamangala poems that when one Harihara Bāiti being bribed by the minister, determined to give false evidence before the king's court, Bimala, his wife, fell at his feet and implored him again and again not to speak falsehood. She knew full well the danger into which Harihara would be led if he told the truth, and in fact the sentence of capital punishment was inflicted on him by the wily and infuriated minister Mahudya for his giving truthful evidence. But heedless of all consequences, she, the true wife, dissuaded her husband with all the earnestness and eloquence of her tongue from giving false evidence in the king's court. "The virtue of truthfulness must be rewarded by God if not by men," she urged, and if her husband would swerve from it "she would take poison and die" rather than be branded as a liar's wife. Whether there was actually a woman named Bimala, who advocated truthfulness in this manner or not, is scarcely worth any historical investigation. These accounts show the rustic bard's conception of the purity of womanhood and this is a true index of the real state of things in our society. The story of Kānchanmālā compiled by Babu Dakshinaranjan Mitramazumdar also shews that wonderful spirit of

Truthfulness and strength of character.

self-sacrifice which characterised the Hindu women-folk of older times. Khullanā was unjustly abused by the kinsmen of Dhanapati for tending sheep in the pastoral fields of Ujāni, the alternatives proposed by the relations of the merchant for vindicating her character and keeping up her social prestige being either the payment of a lakh of rupees by Dhanapati to the merchants assembled in his house, or Khullana's passing through the fire-ordeal to prove the integrity of her character. The weak merchant was ready to make up matters by paying the money demanded, but Khullana insisted on her being allowed to fulfil the conditions of the second alternative, *viz.*, passing through the ordeal proposed by the kinsmen of her husband. She said that she could by no means agree to depend on the so-called forbearance of his greedy relations, who would avail themselves of every opportunity in future to make fresh demands for money and thus make their false allegation a constant pretext for screwing money out of the merchant. On the other hand she was ready to pass through the ordeal and close the matter once for all. Instances of such firm rectitude and moral strength on the part of women are to be found all through these vernacular poems.

CHAPTER II

In fact the rustic literature of Bengal, as presented to us in the ballads of Mymensing and the Dharmamangala poems are full of noble instances of unswerving rectitude and truthfulness. It is strange to observe, that in the lowest stratum of society, moral qualities of high order were abundantly in evidence, showing on what a solid basis of humane virtues the whole fabric of the Hindu community stood. Lau Sen, the hero of the Dharmamangala poems, was made to leave his kingdom of Maina and start for Hākanda across the seas in order to perform an extraordinary legendary feat. But we need not dwell here on the adventure of Lau Sen. His queen Kalinga was a great warrior, whose hand he had gained by fighting. But at the time of leaving Mainā, he made over the charge of his kingdom to Kālu, his faithful general, who belonged to the lowest Hindu caste, *viz.*, the Dom. In reply to the appeal Lau Sen made to him while exhorting him to keep his capital safe from the attacks of enemies, Kalu said with characteristic brevity, "You are my God, oh Lord, I shall sacrifice every drop of

Kalu Dom and his wife Lakṣya.

my blood to protect my trust." As expected the minister Mahudyā came with a large army to attack Mainā during the absence of Lau Sen, and instead of hazarding an open combat with the dreadful general Kalu, he had recourse to several machinations in order to gain possession of the kingdom without bloodshed. Accordingly the services of the famous thief Indā were called for. This man, by the black art he had learned from the Goddess Kālī, threw the whole city of Maina into a profound slumber.[1] The

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[1] Nara Sinha Vasu in the year 1737 gave this account of Inda's art:—

"মন্ত্র পড়্যা মাটী ছড়াইল চারি পানে।
ধরিল অঘোর ঘুম সবার লোচনে॥
কুমার ঢলিয়া পড়ে পিঠে ছিল হাঁড়ি।
ধূলায় ধুসর তার ভগ্নি কাঁচা রাড়ী॥
জয়া বুড়ি বাত্যে জাগে বসেছে কাট্‌নে।
ধরিল পুটল্যা ঘুম তাহার লোচনে॥
ঢলে পড়ে হাতে করি চরখার কাটি।
ভূমে গড়া গড়ি যায় কামড়ায় মাটি॥
উননে ছুতোর বুড়ী দিতেছিল ফুক।
ভূমে ঢল্যা পড়িল আথায় দিয়া মুখ॥
রান্ধুণী রন্ধন শালে ঘুমেতে অজ্ঞান।
পার্শ্বে গড়াগড়ি যায় শলা দশ বাণ॥
যুবতী যুবক সঙ্গে ঘেষা ঘেষী গা।
নিদ্রা যায় স্বামীর গায়েতে ফেলে পা॥
বোঝারি মাথায় বোঝা পথে যায় চল্যা।
ইন্দার নিন্দাটি ধরি গড়ায়ে পড়ল্যা॥
হাটারি বাজারী দেশে ছিল যত জন।
দোকান রহিল পড়ি ঘুমে অচেতন॥"

poet here shows considerable humour in describing the sleeping scenes. An old woman was blowing into the hearth to kindle the fire, there she fell asleep and was not aware of the heat that scorched her face; a day labourer was walking in the streets with a load of faggots on his head, there Inda's magic put him under its spell and he rolled into the mire of the drain alongside the road. The grocer who was weighing his goods and the customer who stretched his hands to receive them, both fell asleep; the whole city thus lay inert and motionless like a painted thing under the spell of the wily thief. Mahudyā attacked the city in this condition and it seemed doomed to sure destruction. Lakṣya, the wife of Kālu Dom, alone in the vast city had no sleep in her eyelids by the grace of Kālī and she saw that her husband's trust was going to be destroyed through the minister's machinations. She roused her two sons Sakā and Sukā from sleep and thirteen faithful chiefs also responded to her call as she used her own spell on them to counteract that of Inda. The two sons with the thirteen chiefs rushed to the battle-field but were killed in no time by the overwhelming numbers of the enemy. Lakṣya saw the death of her sons, but did not waste time in vain grief. She called at the chamber of her lord Kālu, where the invulnerable general, a victim to Inda's evil art, lay in profound

slumber. Kālu would not awake, though she tried all means to break his sleep. She said, "Is this the way in which you keep the trust of your monarch? At last I shall be branded as the wife of an unfaithful man. Alas, if not for the sake of loyalty, arise for the sake of retaliating the death of your sons. Did not the king Daçaratha die, sorrowing over the separation from his sons? Did not Arjuna take the vow to kill himself should he fail to kill Jaydratha who had killed his son? What man is there who, afraid of death, fails to take vengeance upon the murderer of his children? What man is there whom loyalty and the sacredness of a vow made before his master fail to inspire? Are you afraid of death? But death is everyone's lot. Act like a man, my lord." The woman here, though of the Dom caste, shows a strength of character which elicits our admiration, for she does not grieve over her sons who lie dead only at a stone's throw from her house, but shows her inspiring sense of loyalty and devotedness and is keenly alive to the safety of the kingdom entrusted to her husband's care.

Kālu awoke and became conscious of the perilous situation, but he was a hero of heroes, and when burning with vengeance and with a noble rage at the machinations of Mahudyā, he entered the field, he looked like a veritable comet striking terror unto the enemies. They

were demoralised by the mere report of Kālu's approach, whom they had learnt to dread from their cradle. Māhudyā could not stop the precipitous flight of his army and in less than an hour Kālu stood master of the field. He looked with satisfaction over his dispersed enemies, but as he turned his steps homeward, his mind became overwhelmed with grief for his two sons whom his enemies had killed.

Kālu had a younger brother named Kāmbā. He was a very wicked man, and envious of the success of his elder brother, had joined the camp of Māhudyā. When the minister was lost in dismay owing to the defeat of his army, Kāmbā came forward and said addressing him:— "Do not grieve, oh lord, I shall conquer the great victor. I am his brother and know where he is weak." Saying so he asked Māhudyā to employ a barber to shave his head. This done, he had his face besmeared with soot and lime, and took an ass from the camp and rode upon it. He poured on his head a quantity of whey which dripped. All this was the punishment of one disgraced in the court for some serious crime. Mounted on the ass with his cheeks painted black and white and with the whey dripping from his head, he came to the spot where Kālu was lamenting the loss of his sons. With tearful eyes he fell at the feet of his elder brother and briefly gave out a story

of his own invention which ran thus : Though he had joined the enemy, his heart could not be made of stone not to melt into sorrow at the sight of his nephews killed in the field. As he cried like a child when he saw their dead bodies, the minister Māhudyā was angry and said he could no longer be trusted as he was so overwhelmed with grief at the death of his nephews. The minister in fact suspected that he was merely a spy of his elder brother, and in great rage turned him out of the camp subjecting him to all those marks of disgrace.[1] Kāmbā at this point in course of the narration of his story, clasped the feet of his elder brother and piteously begged him to forgive his past wickedness. Kālu's mind was already softened by grief and this appeal from his younger brother, whom he really loved inspite of his wicked nature, deeply touched him. He raised his seemingly repentant brother with his hands and said, "Kāmbā, don't be sorry, you are my brother, my own blood. What is there that I can't give you? I fully pardon you."[2]

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[1] "এত যদি বলিল কালুর ভাই কেমো।
পাত্রের হুকুমে মাথা মুড়াইল রেমো ॥
পাঁচ চুলে করে পেঁচ দিল গোটা দশ।
মুখ বুক বেয়ে রক্ত পড়ে টস্ টস্ ॥
গালে দিয়া চুণ কালী"

[2] Lakhya, the true wife, had overheard the conversation and cautioned her husband against the wily stratagem of his younger brother, saying,—

"সেই কাম্বা কুলাঙ্গার জান পূর্ব্বাপর।
ঘর ভেঙ্গে সবংশে মজেছে লঙ্কেশ্বর ॥"

Kāmbā replied, "Is all that you say true? Do you indeed love me so?" "Yes dear brother," answered the straightforward and open-natured Kālu. "Here do I take the holy water of the Ganges in my hand and take the vow that whatever you may demand of me I shall give to you, no matter if it be my head or all my property." Kāmbā interposed and cried out, "Hear, holy mother Ganges, hear, ye sun and earth, hear, oh ye gods that are in heaven, my elder brother is so pleased with me that he promises in your hearing to give me whatever I may seek of him." "Is it all true, brother?" and as Kālu stretched his hands to bless him and said, "Yes, verily do I say, solemnly do I take the vow of giving you whatever you may ask of me." Kāmbā said, "Stop brother, let your enthusiasm bear out, I want your head. Māhudyā, the minister, has promised me a half of this kingdom if I can produce your head before him; give me your head." For a moment Kālu lost all power of speech in anger,—for a moment he intended to strike the wicked brother dead on the spot; but after a moment he felt that he was in the grip of a villain, from which there was no escape if indeed he had to keep the purity of his vow unsullied in the eyes of God and men. He had never retracted words nor broken promise in his life. The word

The traitor and the hero.

had passed out of his mouth and was inviolable. He did not try to break his word by interpreting the promise in the light of sophistry. It was clear as daylight and he saw his fate. He addressed Kāmbā and said, "I have preserved my noble virtues intact for the sake of loyalty to my king. If I violate my words it may perchance do harm to my sovereign, whose life and future good all depend upon the good will and virtues of his subjects. I will not kill you, dog as you are; there take the sword and cut off my head. Word is word, inviolable and sacred." Kāmbā took the sword and Kālu stretched his neck forward, murmuring his prayers. In the twinkling of an eye the head was severed from the trunk. Kāmbā triumphantly caught hold of the head and was about to march off, when Lakhya, the infuriated wife of the murdered man, quickly came to the spot and seizing the villainous brother by his hair, cut off his head with the sword that lay there warm with the life-blood of her husband. She briefly said to Kāmbā before killing him, "I know my husband's temper. I heard all that passed between you two. I could have saved my husband by killing you before. But he would shun me for ever, had I stood in the way of his fulfilling his word. Hence I waited so long."[1]

[1] Kalu in his usual rustic language admonished the wife for this counsel saying,—

"দুঃখ সুখ দুভাই বিরলে কই কথা।
কি তোর যোগ্যতা শালী তুই এলি হেথা॥"

So saying she embraced the dead body of her husband and carried it to the temple of Kāli, which she entered and, after having closed the doors, sat to worship the Mother, as she had no other work left on this side of the grave—her husband and sons being dead.

Next let us go through the legend of the sunrise in the west as described in the Dharmamangala poems. Of the rectitude and integrity of Bimala's character we have already given a rough idea, but details will follow in the present narrative. Lau Sen, the prince of Mainā, was called upon by the Emperor of Gour at the instigation of Mahudyā to make the sun rise from the west. Lau Sen protested saying that it was an impossible feat, which was not in the power of any man to accomplish. He was neither a Yogi nor a magician to be able to create an illusion, nor were the gods obedient to his will. Yet the Emperor of Gour persisted and declared that unless he accomplished the feat, he would be sentenced to death; for the monarch was convinced that the son of Ranjā (Lāu Sen) possessed, by the grace of the God Dharma, great occult powers and that he alone could shew the extraordinary phenomenon of the sun rising from the west to the people of Gour, if he only wished it.

The legend of Harihar Baiti.

Lāu Sen marched through different countries by land and sea, and ultimately reached Hākanda,

a shrine of great sanctity. There by austerity, fast, vigil and worship, the hardship of which he alone among mortals could bear, the prince was at last able to secure the grace of Dharma who promised that he would create such an illusion among the people of Gour that they would see the sun rising from the west.

So one morning when there was a quiet glow all over the sky indicating the dawn, the early risers of Gour were astonished to see the luminous orb of the sky rising slowly from the western horizon. The ploughman was about to start for the field and the shepherd for his pasture, when the wonderful phenomenon struck them mute with awe. They bowed low before the sun and could not divine the meaning of this freak of Nature.

Lāu Sen, overjoyed at his success, now returned to the capital and obtaining an interview with the king related the great adventures and hardships he had passed through in order to accomplish the extraordinary feat. But Mahudyā, the minister, said that no one had ever witnessed such a thing as the sun rising from the west in Gour. So evidence had to be collected to prove the achievement of the prince. The first witness was one Prahlad. He was a potter by caste and profession, and was known to be a religious man. Prahlad declared before the court that he had seen with his own eyes the astonishing phenomenon on a certain day at early dawn. But Mahudyā

said that he was accustomed to make a fire for burning clay every morning, and the flames of his own fire must have blinded him, so his testimony was not to be believed. The next man who was called upon to give evidence was Harihar Bāiti, a drummer by caste and profession, who recited the name of Hari a lakh of times every day, so that his words could be fully believed. The witness was summoned by the Emperor but in the evening of the preceding day, the minister himself had paid a visit to Harihar Bāiti and offered him 12 gold and 200 silver coins and entreated him not to bear testimony to the fact of the sun rising from the west. Māhudyā held out a threat and promise that should he speak out the truth, he would be a ruined man, but if he would comply with his wishes, the reward now offered was but a prelude to many more valuable presents reserved for him. Harihar, though a man known for his piety and truthfulness, was demoralised partly by the threat and partly by the prospects of presents from the minister, and consented to do as he was bidden.

Bimala, the true wife.

In the morning the constables of the court came to Harihar's house, summoning him to the court. Bimalā, the wife of Harihar, was at this time at the river-ghat with a golden pitcher for carrying water. Suddenly she heard cries and laments in the air all around her. But those who cried and

lamented were unseen beings. They said, "We are all going into hell and there will rot for ages. Help us, oh virtuous soul." Bimalā asked who they were and why should they go to hell and what help she, a poor woman, could render them to save them from their miserable destiny. The spirits said, "We are the ancestors of your husband Harihar Bāiti, who will speak a falsehood on solemn oath to-day in the king's court, and his crime will cause our ruin. You are his virtuous wife, you can, oh dear one, alleviate fate and persuade your husband to speak the truth."

Bimalā forgot to take up the golden pitcher that floated in the stream and with tresses all dishevelled returned home and clasping the feet of her husband, wept like a little girl, saying, "Return the money and do not care for the consequences, speak the truth: save me from being called in all future times a liar's wife and your ancestors from going to hell." Harihar was about to say, "Wait, dear wife, when you will have a necklace of purest pearls and golden bracelets you will know which is better at least on this side of the grave, to tell the truth or to tell a lie." But Bimalā indignantly refused to listen to all prospects of worldly gain and continued weeping; so when Harihar Bāiti came to the court, his wife's just admonition rang in his ears and her tears set at naught the high value

of pearls and gold coins. Māhudyā looked triumphant, sure that the witness's testimony would be all that he desired. But Harihar as he ascended the witness-box, showed in his face signs of such a decisiveness and moral strength as were beyond the dreams of the minister. The drummer said that it was "his duty to beat the drum from the south, evening and morning, and on the day in question, when he came to his duty, he suddenly saw the western pastures and fields aglow with the golden rays of the sun, the stream of the Ganges known as the Bhairava that ran by the west, became crested with golden ripples and the sunrise was simply wonderful, for the sun, contrary to what had been seen since the dawn of creation, for the first time rose from the west and not from the east." The minister's head hung down in shame and disappointment, and the prince Lau Sen appeared more glorious than ever in the eyes of the court.

The result of this truthfulness on the part of the Baiti was an inevitable machination which brought him again before the court on the false charge of a serious theft. His guilt was proved and the Baiti was sentenced to death. But the Baiti did not repent having told the truth when he uttered his last prayers from the scaffold nor did his wife show any sign of weakness when she expressed a wish to court death on the funeral pyre of her husband. She said that she

was happy even in death, as her husband was spotless.

The temptations overcome by Rājā Gopichand remind us of those of the great Buddha. Hira, the harlot, whose beauty was admired by princes, and who was fascinated by the handsome appearance of Gopichand, had used all her coquetry and woman's art to get him to return her love. All was of no avail. The prince not only overcame all temptations but silently bore the severest punishment inflicted on him by the beautiful harlot, who, infuriated at his repeated refusal had adopted some harsh measures to gain his consent. Gopichand's character stands before us in all the loftiness of a true Yogi. Twelve years' persecution could not make him break his vow. On the expiry of the term, he was sent to the Ganges by Hira to bring water, this being one of his daily duties. There on the bank of the Ganges his grief was intolerable, and he wanted to send a message to his dear queen telling her of what he suffered for love of her and for the sake of keeping the vow of sacred wedlock. There were reeds on the river-bank, one of which he secured and made a cut in his limb. The reed served him as pen and his own blood served as ink and with a heart charged with emotion and sorrow, he wrote a letter to the queen. This he entrusted to a

Gopichand writes with a reed for pen and blood for ink.

trained bird. Lau Sen faced similar temptations, though, he was not subjected to similar persecutions. In the village of Baruipara, Narayani, a woman of handsome looks, the wife of Shiva Barui and daughter of Hari Pal, fell in love with the Prince. She offered herself to him saying that if she failed to get a return of love, she would commit suicide. She invited him to her house, but the prince said, "I am an ascetic from the cradle. I never go to the house of a man when he is absent from home and the female inmates all dwell alone. The pleasures you talk of are not for me. I am born a servant of the God Dharma. My life is one of austerity and self-denial, dedicated to his worship." In the Kavi Kankan Chandi, we find the hunter Kalu, born and brought up in the lowest stratum of society, bursting into savage indignation, when his wife made unjust allegations against his character. In one of my lectures I have dwelt upon the wonderful self-denial of Goroknath who overcame temptations which none else perhaps among the mortals could do.

Other instances.

So we find that the whole of old Bengali literature, in which rustic element is predominant, is permeated by a spirit of truthfulness and a lofty sex ideal, the like of which we do not frequently meet with elsewhere. In the fable of Dātā Karṇa we find the hero cutting

the head of his son for the sake of the word he gave to his guest. Western scholars may be inclined to think that the pictures are overdrawn, that the instances of truthfulness cited carry the idea to a morbid and impracticable extremity. But in our country these are not mere imaginary tales. Twenty-three *tirthankars* spent years of their saintly lives in Bengal. The great Buddha himself did not live very far off from Bengal. Renunciation in the cause of truth, sacrifices of the highest order for the sake of a virtuous life are not mere tales here told by an imaginative people. The people from the time of the Buddha and Mahāvira have passed through great austerities and sacrifices for the sake of religion and morality and the whole atmosphere here is charged with the loftiest ideals, which to foreign peoples, may appear as unrealised dreams or figments of imagination. The rustic people had those ideals before them. They constantly read these poems. Hundreds of copies of the small poem of Dātā Karna in which the hero with a saw assisted by his wife cuts the head of their son for the sake of a vow, are to be found in the houses of the rustics. The purity of rural life even in its lowest form is indicated in these poems of Bengal and we must respectfully protest against the allegation of some foreign writers who condemn Bengalis as perjurers and forgers or say that the ideal of truthfulness is essentially

Western. This rustic literature gives a more reliable picture of the people, their ideas and characters, in its pages, than the off-hand remarks of globe-trotters or administrators who do not know the language of the people and judge of them by the scum of society, trained to falsehood in the towns of Bengal where a contact with busy *alien* nations engaged in trade has produced a demoralizing effect on their character. For rectitude, truthfulness, sexual purity and devotedness, some of the characters referred to in the foregoing pages are like precious pearls, though the shells that contain them, the language of the people—may be sometimes coarse and inelegant.

CHAPTER III

Traditions of old mixed with fancy.

In the accounts given by our early poets of the courts of kings we certainly find old traditions, rustic ideas, truth and fancy hopelessly mixed up. It is almost impossible to trace the thread of history from such materials. The Emperor of Magadha, the Mauryas, the Guptas and even some of the Pal kings, no doubt held a paramount power. The tradition of their great wealth and power became the heritage of people and it was impossible for a rustic poet not to be influenced by old memories, while describing a prince of humbler status. So we find on every occasion, when a Raja is to be extolled he is given the title of Pancha Gaureswar, a title which was no doubt claimed by the great Emperors of Magadha, who lorded over Pancha Gours, comprising the whole of Aryavarta. The boundary of the Pancha Gours is defined in the following sloka, which is no doubt known to most of you:

> "সারস্বতাঃ কান্যকুব্জাঃ গৌড়মিথিলোৎকলাঃ।
> পঞ্চগৌড় ইতি খ্যাতাঃ বিন্ধ্যোত্তরবাসিনঃ ॥"

Skanda-Puran.

Beal translates পঞ্চগৌড় as five Indies. We find many old Bengali poets mentioning their own

patrons, the Rajas, as Pancha Goureswar. This was merely by traditional courtesy, as some of the Rajas might claim descent from the great emperors of old. Another familiar phrase is নবলক্ষ সৈন্য or an army of nine lakhs, which we meet everywhere in the descriptions of Gour-kings. The suzerains might once claim such numerical strength for their army, but there is no doubt that this also passed into the phraseology of traditional courtesy adopted towards the later ruling chiefs, big or small. The village poets often confounded great things with small and described kings in a manner which makes their ignorance conspicuous to a degree. A great king whose army consists of nine lakhs, is said to have a kingdom which extended over a space that could be traversed on foot in twenty-two *dandas*, or about 10 hours. In the imagination of the rustic poet, a space traversed in twenty-two *dandas* might be really a big thing, but roughly speaking such a space covers only twenty five square miles. Raja Gopichandra is described by the poet Bhawani Das as possessing a navy of thirty-two *kahan* ships; he had thirty thousand elephants and nine lakhs of horses. He had ninety-nine attendants in his court to serve betel alone and forty feudatory chiefs acknowledged him as their liege lord. But the description verges on the ridiculous when such a potentate is said to have only 1,200 cows in the cowshed and a stock

of seventy *kahans* of cane in his store. The rustic poets' descriptions are full of such incongruities. They could not lose sight of the resources of the petty chiefs, whom they actually saw in their own localities, while their imagination was inflamed by the romance of past traditions.

During the early centuries of Muhammadan rule, the Rajas, who were practically independent so far as the internal administration of their countries were concerned, having only to pay specified amounts of revenue to the Imperial Moslem Government, generally realised their position as "*mabap*" of the people, who had free access to the court and could directly lodge complaints against maladministration. These complaints the Rajas were always ready to listen to and to redress. We find in the Chandikavya that one Bharu Dutta became the minister of the king of Guzrat, and oppressed the people grievously. He was however severely punished when the people acquainted the king with his wicked ways.

Espionage.

In the 18th century, a system of espionage was developed on a comprehensive scale. When crimes are rampant the administration is forced to adopt drastic police measures of which parallels may be found in all ages and in all countries. In the 18th century theft and dacoity prevailed in the country and the Rajas absolutely

depended on the activities of the police for the detection of crimes; and this could not be helped. When the country is raided by wicked people the administrator has to meet the situation by measures which sometimes affect the peace of the innocent people. When a country is in danger, how can the crimes be put down without sweeping measures, which are no doubt dreaded by the people? These measures adopted by the police, as described by the old Bengali poets, have always led to the detection of crimes, and this is certainly their justification though they caused temporary consternation in the country. The Rajas while treating the police as menials, vested them with unlimited powers when any occasion for detection of serious crimes arose. The Police oppressed the innocent and the wicked without discrimination. We find extensive accounts of Police measures, adopted to detect a crime in the Burdwan Palace as related by several poets. This discloses the state of things in the 18th century. Spies were employed all over the capital. There were detectives in charge of rivers who made searches in boats. "The Police-Inspector's aunt," says Bharatchandra, "had seven hundred female spies under her. She wore an ochre-coloured *saḍi* and on her neck hung a garland of Java flowers. Her forehead was covered with vermilion. The woman in various guises visited the houses of

the people for the purpose of seeking information. There were informers in every street, nay in every house. The police pursued ascetics, merchants and foreigners and looted all they possessed. These people were handcuffed and thrown into prison on the slightest suspicion. If a school-boy walked in the street with books and paper, or a gay-tempered youth strolled in the city, scenting himself with sandal perfume and wearing flower-garlands, he was at once arrested on suspicion. The whole city was terror-struck." The account given by Ram Prasad Sen, a contemporary of Bharatchandra, is very much on the same lines.

"Five hundred spies were employed. Some of them disguised themselves as boatmen and employed ferry-boats for their use. Some became tax-collectors and mixed with the shepherds in the pastures. Ten or twenty of them disguised themselves as Vaisnava mendicants. Two of them got their heads shaven, and wore outer mantles and red cloths on their heads. They visited the houses of the people with begging bowls in their hands and the names of gods inscribed all over their bodies. On their backs hung bags containing books. Each of them had two mistresses, they smoked *gunja* drugs which made their eyes red. They had emotional feats, much admired by the people, and now and then exclaimed loudly the names of the apostles

Bira Bhadra and Advaita. The innocent people whose houses they visited thought them to be great religious teachers and waited upon their Holinesses with their wives and children, ministering to their comforts in all possible ways and were always on the alert lest they should lack in their sacred duty." And after all these men were no other than spies. Some of the spies became disguised as ascetics of the Ramananda sect, others as Muhammadan Fakirs. Some again sat in the streets as beggars with their eyes shut and looking more dead than alive. They scarcely opened their mouths to give reply if anybody asked anything of them. "The female informers visited every house in various guises, and the people had no sleep for fear of police persecutions. They had no peace of mind and were always afraid lest some danger befell them. In the evening people were in an excessive hurry to reach their homes, for after nightfall it was not safe to be away from home and to pay visits to friends. Music and dancing which had made the nights happy and full of enjoyment, ceased." Let us mention another contemporary poet describing an incident of a similar nature. Jaynarayan Sen, who lived in the middle of the 18th century, describes the Police-activities for the detection of a theft in the royal palace in the following way:—

"Female spies and informers entered the inner apartments of people in various disguises.

Some of the Police spies dressed themselves as ascetics and wandered in the streets. Foreigners, travellers and pilgrims were thrown into prison by thousands on the barest suspicion. People shut their doors and ventured not to come out even to fetch water or fire. Nobody dared to appear on the roof or on the terrace, every one remained within his chamber with doors and windows closed. If a man was found in the street wearing a garland of flowers, he was at once arrested, not to speak of those who were seen holding swords or other offensive weapons in their hands. In the morning house-search commenced on an extensive scale. The rich merchants of the city were all arrested and a most thorough search as to what was stored in their houses was made by the police. As soon as this order was received, the police force marched in all directions. They looked like so many followers of the king of Death. In the city resided Budu Saha and Sadhu Saha, two rich bankers, who weighed gold coins by maunds, the merchant, Dina Das and Nanu Das who traded in golden wares, Nitya Brahma Das and Ramdas, the foremost bankers, who had many shops in the portion of the city known as the Chakbazar; all of them were arrested. In that locality many other houses were surrounded by the police, who arrested everyone they found dwelling in them. Women of slender waist were

seen running panic-stricken, in the streets, with their gold-embroidered garments all loose and pearls falling from their necklaces that were unstrung, in order to hide themselves from the police."

The poets wrote poems which were certainly products of their imagination, but when we find all of them describing things in the same strain, we may surely accept their accounts as an index of the real state of things that prevailed in the time when the poets flourished. A system of espionage was developed in India in very early times. Chanakya in the fourth century B. C. is represented in the drama Mudra Raksasa as having carried it to perfection. The spies appointed by him were unmatched for their stratagem and succeeded in overthrowing the most complicated plots of conspirators in a marvellous manner. This is graphically described in the drama.

CHAPTER IV

The descriptions of royal costumes found in Manickchandra Rājār Gān written in the 11th century remind us of some of the fresco-paintings in the Elephanta caves. The Hindu King, while at Durbar, seldom wore a long coat; he used a coat-of-mail only when he went to fight. When the king sat on his throne he often used to rest his feet on full-bloomed lotuses. It was also his fashion to hold in his hand a lotus bud with its long stalk. He used to wear a diamond of high value on his turban, and stringed pearls of a large size round his neck. The crown he wore only on State occasions. This was generally of a conical shape like the Pyramid. The earliest specimens of such crowns are to be found in the head-dress made of coloured cork with silver linings, which the Hindu bridegroom wears even now at the marriage ceremony. This head-dress is not only picturesque but historic. The form is commonly found on the head of old statues of Vasudeva, with which most

Costumes.

of us are familiar. In the 15th century when Kirtivasa, the author of the earliest Bengali Ramayana, paid a visit to the king of Gour, he found His Majesty enjoying the sunshine of an April morning, showing that it was not the custom then to wear coats. It was customary during the Hindu times for a king to sit under the royal umbrella at Durbar; among the immediate attendants of the king were fairlooking women, ordinarily seven in number, who waved the *chamara* before the king. The Bhats also sat near him chanting his praises. A member of the royal house used to fan His Majesty. The fan was generally made of flowers; one of the princes waited with a plate of scented betels. On the east sat the rich merchants and the bankers, on the north the feudatory chiefs, on the west a place was reserved for saintly men and ascetics. But facing the king sat his religious preceptor and other scholarly Brahmins. The chief *rayats* had a place in the court from which their complaints were directly heard by the king.

During the Muhammadan times, the Hindu courts became inevitably stamped with Moslem influence, and the simplicity of the old Darbars was lost. The Rajas adopted Muhammadan costumes, the only feature that distinguished them as Hindus being the marks of sandal that they wore on their foreheads. Jaynārāyaṇ, the East Bengal poet of the 18th century, thus

describes a Hindu Raja:—"The king sat in the middle of the court on a golden throne, the royal umbrella was unfurled over his head, matching in the richness of its white colour the flower Kunda and the moon. Between his brows there was a mark of sacrificial ash, the marks called *tripundrika* in three lines adorned his forehead. He wore a turban of rich silk, which sparkled with diamonds; over the turban a bright feather of the bird *kanka* waved gaily in the sunshine. He wore a rich *chapkan* with gold fringes and a coat-of-mail; over his garments hung a string of large pearls. He wore round his waist a large belt decorated with sparkling golden pendants." The dress was much simpler in the fifteenth century when Kirtivasa described Ravan wearing valuable stones and pearls, but only a white *chadar* to cover his body. Of course coats were in use in other parts of India from the earliest times. Even Raja Kaniska in the 1st century A. D. wore long coats, as we find from one of his statues lately unearthed. But in Bengal, the people, high and low, did not care to wear coats in the olden days, as a tight dress was not congenial owing to the climatic conditions. What a contrast do we find in one of the pictures of the Ajanta caves where an Indian king with bare breast adorned with stringed pearls and diamonds receives a Persian ambassador fully

The courts of Rajas stamped with Moslem influence.

dressed in official costumes! The Bengali poet Ramnārāyan in the 17th century thus describes King Isai Ghosh of Dhekur. "He wore a turban of the shape of a lotus, on two sides of which hung sparkling golden clothes. Each of his ears was adorned with a large pearl. His manly arms were decorated with the golden ornament called the *bijata*, inlaid with stones of various colours. He wore armour on his breast and scented his body with sandal perfumes. On his forehead was a crescent-shaped mark of sandal. He also wore a large belt, from which flashed two swords on the left and two scabbards on the right. On his left hand was a bow of great size and in the right a long spear. A large shield made of the skin of the rhinoceros hung on his back." This was of course when the king was going to the battle-field. Lau Sen's general Kalu "wore a turban on his head in a bending position, from the top of which appeared peacock feathers like a broom. Strong armour protected his breast, to his waist-belt he fastened a scabbard and an axe, and on his back were a quiver full of shafts, and a shield.

Women's costumes and ornaments.

In the 17th century much æsthetic taste was displayed in the designs of the costumes of women of high rank. Painting the body, not tattooing, was the prevailing fashion. This with ornaments of a variety of designs showed a high

degree of æsthetic sense. The Vaisnavas were the creators of fashions in the country. There is a passage in the Govindalilamrita by Jadunandan Das, which gives a detailed account of a princess' toilet and robing. The description is very interesting but will suffer in translation. Still we cannot help giving a few extracts. "Then came the maid Lalita with a gold hair-comb, she combed Radha's hair arranging it in beautiful braids. The princess' hair, wet after her bath, was dried with the smoke of burnt *dhupa* and *dhuna* incense; her long curling locks were scented with soft perfumed oil and

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[1] ....রত্ন কাকুই লঞা।
ললিতা করয়ে বেশ কেশ বিনাইয়া॥
ধূপ ধুনা দিয়া সেই কেশাগ্র শুকাইল।
সিগ্ধ সুকুঞ্চিত কেশ সুগন্ধিত কৈল॥
সহজে সুগন্ধি কেশ অগরুর গন্ধ।
তাহাতে দিলেন আনি অনেক সুগন্ধ॥
বেণী বিনাইয়া দিল শঙ্খ চূড়ামণি।
কালসর্প ফণে যেন শোভে দিনমণি॥
বকুলের মালা দিব্য মুকুতার মালা।
তাতে দিল তেল যেন ত্রিবেণীর মেলা॥
সমষ্টি করিয়া পুন স্বর্ণসূত্র দিয়া।
মূলেতে বান্ধিল পট্টজাদ তাতে দিয়া॥
সূক্ষ্ম রক্ত বস্ত্র ধনি ভিতরে পরিল।
তাহার উপরে নীল বসন ধরিল॥
ভ্রমরের বর্ণ বস্ত্র অতি সূক্ষ্মতর।
মেঘাম্বর নাম তার অতি মনোহর॥
আশ্চর্য্য কোঁচার—ইত্যাদি

See the author's Typical Selections, Part II, pp. 1291-95.

with *aguru*. The braids were bound by a clip made of the precious stone called the Çankhachuḍa; from the black hair it shone like the sun from the hood of a black snake. The braids were alternatively interwoven with a string of pearls and a garland of white *bakul* flowers. These all again were folded and bound into a knot by a fillet woven with golden threads. She wore a purple-coloured shift and over that a blue-coloured Saḍi. The colour of this Saḍi was like that of a bee; it was called the *meghumbur* or the cloud-cloth and was made of very fine threads. A golden-threaded band served for a waist-belt, to which was attached by golden threads small pendants of precious stones. Bishaka applied the perfumes of sandal, *karpur* and *aguru* to Radha's person. Chitra and Indulekha, two expert painters, drew the picture of flowers, foliage and crescent moon and of Cupid's bows and arrows below her breasts, covered with red silken cloths, edged with small rubies and pearls. The coloured picture looked like the rainbow and the breasts like gilded hills against the background of a purple-coloured evening. Each of her ears had a blue stone set in a golden leaf ....Her necklace was formed of emeralds which were small towards the extremity, but gradually increased in size; these were strung together with gold threads interspersed with small diamonds. In the middle

hung a small golden pendant of the shape of a swan. There was another necklace of pearls in the middle of which was a locket of gold inlaid with precious stones. But prominently there hung on her neck a garland of wild *gunja* fruits. These were presented to her by Krisna, pleased with her dance. This garland occupied the foremost place among the ornaments she wore on her breast, to which it clung like her love...........On her arms she wore a pair of *angad* of gold placed on a black band interwoven with gold threads. She wore bracelets of blue stones on her hands and a pair of *kankana* with pendants of silk, carrying at their ends small pearls and precious stones."

I do not venture to quote the whole passage, as other ornaments are mentioned some of which are not known now and others are purely local; unless one illustrates them by figures it will not be possible to convey any clear and definite idea of them. Suffice to say that the ornaments and dress were such as to show the beauty of a woman to a great advantage according to oriental taste. These ornaments were not at all heavy or too many. If it were possible to give the picture of a woman with the apparel and ornaments described above, it would, I dare say, create a lovely and fascinating impression, even in the mind of a western critic.

Descriptions of ornaments and attire are to be found in many places of old Bengali

Literature. Some of these will be found in my Typical Selections from old Bengali Literature (pp. 210, 227, 260, 286, 334, 335, 372, 385, 486, 667, 829, 907, 1223, 1291, 1293, 1294, 1295, 1519, 1520, 1521 and 1794.

I have already mentioned that during the Muhammadan supremacy the Hindu courts became stamped with Moslem influence. The officers of the courts were no longer named in the old Hindu style. The Rajas wore costumes that were in fashion amongst the Muhammadan aristocracy, and, as I have already stated, were distinguished as Hindus by marks of sandal and sacrificial ash on their foreheads. In their courts also the only feature to distinguish them from the Muhammadans was the predominance of a Brahminic element represented in Brahmin teachers, poets and scholars who still occupied honoured seats in the Durbars, but the officers generally bore Muhammadan names. "The Sepoys (soldiers) stood in rows in the audience hall with clasped hands, with shields on their breasts and swords hanging from their belts. The Gharials, or the officers-in-charge of royal clocks stood on either side.

A Hindu Court after the Muhammadan fashion.

Chapdars, or office peons, stood in a line with golden staffs in their hands. In a prominent place stood the Arojbegi, the officer who received applications and submitted them to

the king. The Bhats, or the court minstrels, sang His Majesty's praises, the Mosahibs, or the court parasites, were all there. The latter silently watched the mood of their royal patron. There were the Munshis, the Baxis, the physicians, the Kazis or the Magistrates, the Kanungas or the surveyors and others whom the king allowed access to his court. The musicians with the Rarab, the Tammura, the Vina, the Mridanga and other instruments had a place reserved for them. The Nakib, or the court-herald, whose duty it was to announce new arrivals and loudly proclaim to them the ways of Durbar-courtesy, the Ujjak, the Kajjalbas, the Hafshis and the Jahlads (executioners) also stood in the places attached to each."

This is the description that Bharat Chandra gives of a Hindu Court in the 18th century, and it will not require any great pains to see how much it was predominated by Moslem influence.

It appears from a couplet of Bharat Chandra that in the 18th century, thieves, robbers and other criminals who were punished with penal servitude and put into the jail, were allowed their liberty for a fixed period of time every day in order to beg their daily subsistence in the markets with their feet bound in chains. This certainly relieved the State of a considerable expenditure, while the rigour of imprisonment was none the less severely felt by the criminals.

CHAPTER V

The whole of the old literature of Bengal presents to the reader scenes and the characteristics of country-life. The poets describe with unfailing accuracy the flowers and plants that grow in particular seasons. The indigenous element is present throughout these descriptions, which powerfully appeal to the popular mind. This affords a striking contrast to writings of our modern poets, who often show in prolific language a superficial appreciation of Nature without giving any proof of real observation of country-life or a close study of Nature. There are some set-phrases which most of them use while describing Nature. The Dakshina Malaya or the Southern Breeze, the warblings of the cuckoo and *pāpia*—the blooming flowers and their fragrance are some of the stock phrases which they are fond of introducing into their lyrical poems; but they will never be able to tell you in what season what flowers bloom or in what season the notes of some particular species of birds are heard. One of our modern poets whose poetical primer has been read by at least three generations

Old poetry shows an intimate observation of Nature.

of Bengalis, describes the flowers of a garden as all blooming in the morning. This is far from being the case. This sweeping observation, erroneous as it is, may be excused, but when he actually names the Malati flower and says that it blooms in the morning it is certainly inexcusable. The Malati flower blooms in the evening. Old Valmiki at least three thousand years ago knew that. He writes that in the rainy season when the sky was thickly overcast with clouds pouring incessant rain, Ram, dwelling in his cottage on the Malayavan Hills, could not distinguish night from day, but when the Malati bloomed near his cot he could at once conclude that it was evening. We read in Madan Mohan's poetical primer the familiar lines describing the morning. "ফুটিল মালতী ফুল, সৌরভ ছুটিল। পরিমল লোভে অলি আসিয়া বসিল॥" "The Malati bloomed and spread its fragrance which attracted a number of bees that sat on it." The Bengali boys of this generation also read this couplet, as did their fathers and forefathers, and in the hundreds of editions through which the book has passed, none has cared to correct the error. The Bengalis in truth have ceased to be lovers of Nature. In the good old days there was scarcely a Bengali house that had not a garden of flowers attached to it. They needed flowers for the purpose of worshipping the Maker of all, each morning and

had ample opportunities to love them and observe their growth. So we confidently accept their statements to be true when Kavikankan writes in the 16th century that the Champaka and Malati bloom in Chaitra,—when Kirtivasa writes in a still earlier age that the Ketaki flowers bloom in profusion in the month of Bhadra, when in the 17th century Ghanaswama refers to the thick blossoming Madhavi flowers in Vaisakha and Bharatchandra and Ramprosad of the 18th century speak of the fine array of Kadamba flowers and of white and red lotuses in the months of Ashara and Sravan respectively. In Bharat Chandra's time, and even earlier, fans made of Mallika flowers were used by people of taste specially by lovers. The poets knew well the different species of bird whose gay notes were heard in different seasons. Govinda Chackravarty in the 17th century refers to the notes of Dahuki and Chatak in the month of Sravan. It is unnecessary to give here a catalogue of flowers and birds mentioned by other poets as associated with particular seasons. We are sure that the descriptions are accurate and that the poets derived their knowledge first-hand from Nature. What a pity that we know the mere names of flowers and birds, having read of them in books but are scarcely able to point them out in the fields or forests, or describe their qualities and special features! When there is quite a

craze in the heads of our people for higher knowledge in Botany and cognate subjects, is it not strange that we have grown unfamiliar with the most common-place objects presented to our eyes every day by the country in which we dwell?

2. Stray notes on some of the Early Bengali ballads.

The Bengali Literature, of which written specimens, however few, are found from the 9th century A.D., offers many points to interest not only those who are engaged in exploring the origin and development of our language, but even those who concern themselves merely with its poetic and literary features. The literature of the Buddhist period is mostly confined to rustic songs which have an essentially indigenous character. In this respect it offers a striking contrast to the later epoch of our literature, that grew with the Hindu Renaissance and is permeated by Sanskrit influence. The metaphors and similes to be found in the songs of Maināmati, in the Çunya Purāṇa, in the aphorisms of Dāk and Khanā, in the poems on Minanātha and Gorokṣhanātha, and last of all in the flowering ballad-poetry of Eastern Bengal, are all taken from the village-life as presented to us in the fertile plains of our lower Gangetic valley. They are so familiar to every Bengali

that their naive simplicity seems to be dearer and more attractive than the more pompous figures of speech employed to embellish the poems of the 15th and the 16th centuries,—the age when the vernacular literature received such a powerful impetus from Sanskritic study.

Bengali poetry before the Renaissance.

We must, however, remind our readers that we do not find the literature of the Pre-Moslem period in its present shape exactly as it was when it was first composed. Later poets and writers did in many cases recast them and introduce some modern features therein. Yet when one reads the poem on Gorakṣanātha by Faizulla, one cannot but be convinced that the poet who retells an old tale, has preserved specimens of the writings of the 10th and the 11th centuries in a considerable degree. The language and the ideas almost wholly belong to a much earlier age than the 14th or the 15th century, when Faizulla put the songs in their present form. He simply narrated the old story with some additions and alterations, but these do not seem to be very many. He took pains only to regulate the metre, *payār*, adding here and there a few words of his own. He meant the book for his rustic villagers who were quite familiar with the earlier language of the country, used in songs, and therefore did not think it at all

necessary to make the style refined or Sanskritic. The metaphors as used in the older songs are preserved intact, and nowhere in the work is there any sign of Sanskritic influence, a point which clearly shews that the poem in question has no kinship with the literature of the Hindu Renaissance, the chief characteristic of which is an abundance of Sanskritic metaphors and allusions. Thus we find the works on Mainā-mati strewn with indigenous similes and metaphors derived from a knowledge of country-life. Maināmati speaks of the fleeting nature of youth and uses a number of metaphors to convince her son of the truth of her remarks. "This life," she says, "is unsteady as water on the leaf of the plant colocasia." (কচুপাতার জল যেন করে টলমল) If a poet of the Renaissance were to describe it, however illiterate and unassuming he might have been, he would have used 'the lotus leaf' instead of the "leaf of colocasia." But the latter is a more familiar plant in Bengal and is at least as expressive of the idea to be conveyed by the poet, as the lotus plant. Then again the old queen Maināmati says, "Your youth, my son, will pass away as quickly as water falls from a reed when it is cut."

"নলখাগ কাটিলে যে হেন পড়ে পানি।
তেন মত হবে বাপ তোহ্মার জোওনি॥"

This is also a very humble metaphor which the poet of the later school would not deign to use but it is none the less appropriately used. To external beauty, if the inside is not beautiful, no value should be attached, for the queen says "Break the dead sea apple and you will find nothing but ashes inside." (ভাঙ্গি চাও কেন্দা ফল ভিতরে আঙ্গার।) The queen again teaches, if life is not regulated by wisdom in proper time, what will it avail by one's awaking to a sense of duty when the tide has passed away. She says, "What is the good of putting oil in the lamp when the light is out, of making a ridge when water has flowed away from the cornfield?"

"প্রদীপ নিবিলে বাপু কি করিবে তেলে।
আইল বান্ধিলে কিবা জল ছুটে গেলে॥"

All these are in every day use in the language of the country-folk and directly convey the idea of the speaker. A learned poet like Vidyapati of the 14th century would have brought forward an array of brilliant classic figures to express the same idea, but the simplicity and the freshness of country air breathed in our indigenous metaphors, are no less genuinely poetical than the more ingenious and learned classical references. The two couplets quoted above, if they fail to take us by equal surprise, at least

will make the thing described equally vivid as Vidyapati's sparkling lines.

"হিম কর কিরণে নলিনী যদি জারব, কি করব মাধবী মাসে।
অঙ্কুর তপন তাপে যদি জারব, কি করব বারিদ মেহে ॥"

"If the water-lily fades away in the beams of the winter-moon, what will it avail by the advent of the spring season? If the seed is burnt by the sun, what will the clouds do by pouring rain on its grave?" It is true that the poets of the earlier school sometimes lacked in what we moderns, call a sense of decency, but even in this respect they were less artificial and less suggestively wicked. I shall presently quote a passage from a Maināmati song, which may not stand the test of a too austere aesthetic taste, but if we are a little tolerant, we shall not fail to appreciate in it the charming argumentation of a village woman trying to convince her husband of her points. When the king expresses his determination to leave the palace as an ascetic, his queen Adunā says that her youthful beauty will be a source of constant trouble to her, and to avoid that she will break her eight bright teeth in the front row to disfigure her face and crop her long beautiful hair. At this the king says that he cannot take her with him inspite of all that she may urge. Then she says, "What shall I do with my youth pledged to

you? My youth is not like a stock of corn that I may store it in a granary, nor is it like the oil of a grocer, to be reserved for future sale; it is not a heap of flowers which a flower-woman daily wreathes into garlands, nor is it a thing mortgaged to a moneylender to be recovered by the owner on settlement of claim. Teach me, my lord, how may I preserve the youth, pledged to you alone in God's name, from its passing away, till your return?"

"ধর্ম্মঘটী যৌবন মুহি কিরূপে রাখিমু ।
ধান চাউল নহে যে গোলা বান্দি থুমু ॥
তেলি ঘরের তৈল নহে বাজারে বেচিমু ।
মালী ঘরের পুষ্প নহে বসিয়া গাথিমু ॥
দাবীদারের দাবী নহে খোশাইয়া দিমু ॥"

How familiar are the metaphors used here to rustics, and appropriate to country life! Adunā says to her lord in the version of the song collected by Sir George Grierson in 1878, "You will be, Lord, the fig tree and I a creeper. I will cover thy feet with a loving embrace. How can you think of leaving me?" [1] Throughout this literature there is that inspiration breathed from country-life, which by its simplicity, directness and unassuming gentleness attracts us as do

[1] "তুমি হবু বট বৃক্ষ আমি তোমার লতা ।
রাঙ্গা চরণ বেড়িয়া রবু পলাইয়া যাবু কোথা ?

the fresh field-flowers on both sides of a rural path. There is certainly in these poems an element of grotesque imagination, of unrestrained rustic fancy like what we find in old Danish songs of the 9th and the 10th centuries, but as in the densely jungly country-side, sometimes fresh flowers bloom in all their natural beauty, so do we come across quiet and simple rural charms enlivening all the uncouth humour of rustic people, displayed in these songs.

The elevated moral tone

The literature of this period has another attractive feature. There is an elevated moral tone in the poems, which we miss in the more elegant poems of the later school. The Buddhist religion lays a great stress on the conquest of passions, on truthfulness, integrity and other moral virtues. In these songs though couched in crude language, distinct traces of a high conception of morality are always observable. It should be mentioned here that Behula's character was first conceived in this time, however greatly it may have been embellished by the more refined poets of the Renaissance period. The ground-work of that devotion, which clings to the beloved even in death, that absolute disregard for all desires of the flesh in the pursuit of a sacred cause and that divine love which triumphs over death, and blossoms majestically like one of the stately water-lilies in Indian tanks,

was first conceived in this country in the Buddhist period. Kanchanmala, is as great a character in old women's fables as Behula in the songs of the poets of the Manasa-cult. This old story preserved almost in the language of the 11th and the 12th centuries has been collected by Babu Dakshinaranjan Mitra Mazumdar and is to be found in his Thakur Dadar Jhuli. Like the story of Behula, that of Kanchanmala is to be read with tears. One requires to be trained in discovering beauty in old things; for just as gold often lies mixed with inferior metals and dirt in the mine and requires trained eyes to be discovered, so the genuine beauty of old writings often deceives untrained eyes being blended, as they are, with fantastic imagination and crude humour. I recommend to my readers the story of Kanchanmala. Her character is one of the loftiest order showing resigned love in its highest flights. In order to depict an ideal character poets often take recourse to wild imagination. An element of the grotesque is present in Valmiki, Homer and Shakespeare. But this should not bar one from appreciating the real greatness of the characters described. In Manick Chandra Rajar Gan, the character of Gopichand shews its sterling worth, when put to test by the seductions of the beautiful harlot Hira. We have seen in the Dharmamangal poems how Lau Sen was also put to a

similar test in the village of Baruipara and came out successful. The integrity of the character of Kalu, the general of Lau Sen, and of Harihar Baity has been shewn by me in a previous lecture. The ground-work of all these tales and even that of Kalketu, the hunter, were laid in the Pre-Moslem period by earlier poets, though Kavikankan is popularly known as the only poet of the latter tale. They all prove the loftiness of moral ideal that existed in the country and unmistakably bear the stamp of the Buddhist ideal, which has always through the various forms of the Mahayana and Hinayana sections, aimed at controlling the passions as the first principle of সদ্ধর্ম (true religion). That these stories were first conceived during the Buddhist times is apparent from the fact that the Brahmanic element is hardly present in them. The principal characters generally belong to the lowest stratum of the Hindu society.

Mainamati-songs and the allegations.

A large mass of poems bearing on the queen Mainamati have come to light since Sir George Grierson discovered one of its versions in Rangpur in 1878. The Yogis were the custodians of these songs and during the age of the Pal kings, who held sway over almost the whole of Northern India, they carried these songs throughout India in the 10th and 11th centuries, till they became so popular that even in modern

times we find the song of Gopichand sung not only in the north-western provinces, but even in the Mahratta country. "In Benares, Faizabad, Ahmednagar and Bombay," says Dharmananda Mahabharati, "dramas are played, of which the theme is Gopichand; and hundreds of minstrels still earn their livelihood in those parts of the country by singing songs on Gopichand." The picture of Raja Gopichand on the eve of his *ṣannyas*, drawn by the late Raja Ravi Varman is sold in hundreds not only in Bombay but even in Calcutta. We have shewn elsewhere that the songs on Manasa Devi and her quarrel with Chānd, the merchant of Champak, also travelled from Bengal and found appreciation in many places of India. They are even now reproduced in the popular dialects of the country and read and appreciated by thousands of people outside Bengal. This unmistakably shews that the suzerainty of the Buddhist kings of Bengal was recognised and admitted by the whole of Aryavarta; the manners, fashions and amusements of Bengalis flowed from Magadha and other administrative centres of Bengal to different parts of India. We have got a number of songs of Gopichand written in Urdu and Hindi. Pundit Durga Narayan Sastri collected some of these versions from the Punjab and made a gift of them to the Sahitya Parishat of Calcutta. One of the

Hindi versions of Gopichand's songs by Laksman Das is in my possession. The Behula-katha or the song on Manasa Devi in Hindi printed at the Kalpataru press, Benares, in 1910, may be obtained at the shop of Babu Kanai Lal, Bookseller in Patna. There are several other Hindi versions of the tale, and as in Bengal, so in Bhagalpur and other places, there are organised bands of professional singers who earn their living by singing them. I have mentioned elsewhere that these songs on Manasa Devi and Gopichand, as prevalent outside Bengal, shew the crude stage in which they existed in Bengal in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries, and none of the subsequent embellishments introduced by the later Bengali poets are marked in them. This shews that with the close of the sovereignty of the Pal kings and their vast influence all over India, Bengal ceased to be the centre of taste, fashion and amusement that it had been before the Muhammedan invasion.

Now to return to the subject of the songs of Mainamati. Sir George Grierson was the first, as I have already stated, to bring one of its versions to light in 1878. This was published in the journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in that year. In the Sahitya Parishat Patrika, Volume VI, Babu Siva Chandra Sil published a version of the song, of which the author was one Durlava Mullick. He latterly

edited and brought out the song. This, I suppose, is the latest version of the tale, for we find it thoroughly modernised and its *payār* metre all through regulated according to the canon of fourteen letters in a line, which has subsequently been its distinctive feature. In the Sahitya Parishat Patrika of 1315 B. S. Babu Bisweswar Bhattacharyya, B.A., then Deputy Magistrate of Nilphamary in Rangpur, published an account of another version of the song, which he collected from a *yogi* of that place. The copy he took of it was for sometime with me and I published a portion of it in my Typical Selections from Bengali Literature, published by the University of Calcutta in 1914. Another version of the Mainamati song was collected by Babu Nagendra Nath Vasu, Prachyavidyamaharnava, from Orissa. The Bengali Yogis, owing to a political disturbance, had left their mother country and settled in that place many centuries ago and it was from their descendants that Mr. Vasu collected the song. It is written in Oriya characters and the copy is more than two hundred years old. An extract of this version also has been given in my Typical Selections. Babu Nalini Kanta Bhattasali, M.A., collected another song on the same subject from a village near Balurghat in the district of Dinajpur. We came across an edtion of this song, printed long ago, and the forthcoming volume

on Gopichandra's song to be published by the Calcutta University, will contain this song composed by Sukur Mamud, who was an inhabitant of the village Sindur-Kusumi in the District of Rajshahi. Babu Baikuntha Nath of Tippera collected another song of Mainamati and made it over to Babu Nalini Kanta Bhattasali in 1318 B. S. This gentleman edited and published this song at the cost of the Dacca Sahitya Parishat in July 1914. Babu Nalini Kanta has written a learned preface to this book, the author of which is one Bhawani Das. He considers that this Bhawani Das is a brother of Ganga Das, son of Sasthi Vara and he puts forth two arguments to establish this theory: (1) The name of Ganga Das's father is Sasthi Vara, which is also the name of Bhawani Das's father (2); Bhawani Das and Ganga Das have both the title 'Das' suffixed to their names. The argument, I consider to be frail for building up this theory, unsubstantiated by other facts of historical value. The agreement in the name of their father may be a mere chance coincidence. Ganga Das was certainly a poet of the Hindu Renaissance, who wrote many works in Bengali in the 16th century, referred to by me in detail in my Vangavasa-O-Sahitya (pp. 343-450). His style is essentially Sanskritic as contrasted with the crude style of Bhawani Das's poem on Mainamati. Bhawani Das doos not use a single

Sanskritic figure of speech, his metaphors and similes are all culled from rural life, whereas Ganga Das's poems sparkle with a brilliant array of Sanskritic metaphors. Unless the theory of Mr. Bhattasali is substantiated by more convincing evidence, we are not prepared to accept the statement that Bhawani Das and Ganga Das were brothers and sons of Sasthivara and grandsons of Kulapati. Evidently following my earlier statement Mr. Bhattasali considers Ganga Das to have been a Vaidya by caste, but I have found it distinctly mentioned in an old manuscript of Ganga Das's Manasar Bhasan that the poet belonged to the Bania caste. Many other songs of Mainamati are lying scattered in different parts of Bengal and outside it, and though crude in form and inelegant in style, they are store-houses of much historical information.

I think there is much truth in Mr. Bhattasali's finding that Raja Govinda Chandra inherited the kingdom of Tippera from Raja Tilak Chandra, his grandfather on mother's side, and that Vikrampur was the home of his ancestors. That he was a son of Trailokya Chandra, a king of the Chandra dynasty, who reigned there as Mr. Bhattasali suggests, cannot be proved with certainty; but we find the name of Suvarna Chandra both in ballads and on copper-plates. Govinda Chandra, we believe, was probably a scion of the Chandra

family. This conjecture receives a substantial confirmation from the fact that Trailakya Chandra is mentioned in a Marhatta poem as an ancestor of Govinda Chandra of the songs. The agreement in the two names in a short geneological table which contains only four names do not appear to us as mere chance coincidence but sufficient to indicate the actual facts about a dynasty preserved in rustic memory with some errors and omissions which are not unusual in such cases. Govinda Chandra inherited the districts of Dacca and Tippera from his father and mother's side respectively. He married two daughters of Raja Harish Chandra of Sāvār, who seems to have left no male issue. By possessing a large area of land, near Gour, leased out to him by the emperor of Gour, he acquired a great influence in Northern Bengal, and the Yogis of Rangpur still sing songs about him, and remember the great monarch who renounced his palace and lived the life of an ascetic for twelve years, by the order of his mother. Thus it is probable that when Raja Rajendra Chola (1063-1112) came to conquer Bengal, he found Gobinda Chandra of the songs, reigning over a considerable portion of Eastern Bengal. The Tirimalaya rock-inscriptions mention that Raja Govinda Chandra was defeated by Rajendra Chola and that he beat a precipitous retreat on the back of

his elephant. This may or may not be true, as it is but an one-sided version of the story. There was surely a fight after all. The Bengali ballads say that Raja Govinda Chandra defeated the fierce tribe, the Khandaits of Orissa, and later on had a hard encounter with an Oriya king, whose army he totally routed having killed thousands of men, horses and elephants in the battle. Seven hundred generals of the Oriya king are said to have been killed in this battle by the victorious army of Govinda Chandra. A treaty was concluded later on by which the defeated king secured the good will of his conqueror by offering him his daughter in marriage. Some scholars have supposed that this Oriya king of the Bengali songs is none other than Rajendra Chola himself. He came from the Orissa side and hence he has been called an Oriya king by the Bengali rustic poets. This is quite possible, for once the poet mentioned the fact of Govinda Chandra's defeating the Khandaits, who were the true Oriya army. The mention of an Oriya king a second time as a quite different foe, presumably shews that he might have been an invader who came from the Oriya side, not actually the king of Orissa. The time of Govinda Chandra who was a contemporary of Harish Chandra of Sāvār, also agrees with that of Rajendra Chola. Thus there is a good deal of evidence for the conclusion that

Rajendra Chola of the Deccan and the 'Oriya king' of the Bengali ballads are one and the same person. If this surmise is true, there will be then only this anomaly that Rajendra Chola's rock inscriptions record his own victory, whereas the songs of the Bengali poets mention that it was Rajendra Chola who was defeated and not Raja Govinda Chandra. In histories of wars such contradictory statements not infrequently occur, and hence this does not offer any serious hinderance to our accepting the 'Oriya king' of the ballads as 'Rajendra Chola'.

One may ask how is it that we identify Gopichandra with Govinda Chandra. In several versions of these songs, as for instance, in Durlava Mullick's one, the name occurs as Govinda Chandra throughout and nowhere is he called Gopi Chandra. In earlier songs we find the name sometimes given as Govinda Chandra, sometimes as Gopi Chandra but more often as Govi Chandra. So there can be no doubt that Gopi Chandra and Govi Chandra are the abbreviated forms of the name Govinda Chandra.

The main object of these songs seems to be to extol the great occult powers acquired by Mainamati, the queen of Raja Manick Chandra, and to describe the ascetic-life laid by Raja Govinda Chandra, her son, for twelve years. But though Mainamati is raised to the level of a goddess in popular estimation and her great

feats are enthusiastically described by the country-poets, it is apparent from many suggestive lines that there were many, who condemned Mainamati as a sorceress and a vile woman, who even killed her husband to gratify her lust. In the version of the songs collected from Nilfamary, Govinda Chandra openly accused his mother in this way, "Forming an intrigue with Haripa, you have killed my father by making him swallow poison, and now you have at the instigation of that cursed Hari resolved to banish me from my kingdom, so that the way to your lust may be made perfectly free from all obstruction." [1] The Raja asked his mother, who vaunted her power of restoring the dead to life and performing other miracles. "How is it that you did not impart a little of your knowledge to my father, whereby my father would have been immortal for ages and could have had many more sons like me?" [2] The queen said, "You fool of a son,

[1] The dowager queen governed the kingdom when Govinda Chandra was a minor, but just when the latter attained his majority, the queen expressed a strange resolve that her son should go to the forest as an ascetic and remain as such for twelve years.

হাড়ির গিয়ানে তোনার গিয়ানে জননী একস্তর করিয়া।
আমার পিতাকে মারছেন মা গরল বিষ খাওয়াইয়া॥
বুদ্ধি পরামিশে আমাক বনে পাঠাইয়া।
ওয়া বীচি খাবেন তুমি ঐ হাড়ি লৈয়া॥

[2] গোটা চারেক গেয়ান যদি আমার বাপক দিলেন।
যুগে যুগে আমার পিতা বাচিঞা রইলান হএ।
আমার নাকা পাঁচ পুত্র আরও পাইলেন হএ॥
ময়না বলে শুন ছেলে আমি বলি তোরে।
নিবুদ্ধিয়া রাজপুত্র নিবুদ্ধিয়ারে কাল॥

how can I explain all that to you, being your mother? I offered to teach the old Raja, your father, the secret of life and occult power, but he rejected the offer in disdain saying that he could not condescend to be taught by his wife." Govinda Chandra said, "All this is false, mother, I can have no faith in all that you say. You have accepted betel from the hands of the Hari (Haripa), and you have fallen in love with him. You have learnt the black art from him. Were you a true wife, why did you not ascend the funeral pyre of my dead father and burn yourself dead as a Sati?"[1] When the Raja said all these things, the queen Mainamati was naturally shocked by her son's out spoken imputations. She began to weep and curse her lot by saying that her own son, whom she had borne in her womb for ten months, was so cruel as to abuse her thus and make false imputations against herself and the Hari, whom she regarded as her brother, both being disciples of the same Guru

এক জননী হএ তোমার বুঝাব কত কাল।
কৈছিলাম তোমাব পিতাক গেয়ান শিখিবার ॥
ঘরের নারীর গিয়ান দেখে তোমার পিতা গিয়ান করেছে হেলা।

[1] রাজা বলে শুন জননী জননী লক্ষী রাই।
এসব কথা মিথ্যা মা তোমার বিশ্বাস না পাই ॥
হাড়ির খাইছেন গুয়া মা হাড়ির খাইছেন পান।
ভাব করিয়া শিখিয়া নিছেন ঐ হাড়ির গিয়ান ॥
হাটে গেছেন বাজারে গেছেন কিনিয়া খাইছেন খই।
আমার পিতার মরণের দিন সতী গেছেন কই ?
আমার পিতার মরণের দিন সতী গেলেন হএ।
সত্য ররজার পুত্র নাঁও পড়ানু হএ ॥

Gorakshanath.[1] In the song by Bhawani Das, brought out by the Dacca Sahitya Parishat and edited by Babu Nalini Kanta Bhattasali, Govinda Chandra called for evidence from his mother to prove and substantiate her explanation that she had ascended the funeral pyre of her deceased husband then and there, but that fire did not burn her owing to her possessing occult knowledge and miraculous powers.

Before we attempt to discuss this serious allegation of her son against her character, let us give a brief history of the queen Mainamati as found in these songs. Mainamati was the daughter of the king Tilak Chandra, Raja of Meherkul (Tippera). In her childhood she was called by the name of Sishumati. While in her father's house, she one day met the great Yogi Gorakshanath, who initiated her into the mystic art by which men could be made immortal and the dead restored to life. The Guru gave her the name of Mainamati, by which she was subsequently called by all. She is occasionally described as "Maina Sundar" or Maina, the

[1] যখন ধর্ম্মী রাজা জননীকে কটু বাক্য বলিল।
কাটা রিরিখের লাগাএ ময়না ঢলিয়া পড়িল।
করুণা করিয়া বুড়ি মএণা কাঁদিতে লাগিল॥
ভগবান এই পুত্র জন্মেছিল এ হৃদি মাঝারে।
বেটা হঞা কলঙ্ক দিল ভাই হাড়ির বরাবরে॥
গোরখনাথ গুরু হাড়ি ধর্ম্মের ভাই।
দোন জনে জ্ঞান শিখেছি একই গুরুর ঠাঁই।
সেই সম্বন্ধে হাড়ি আমার ছোট ভাই॥

Beautiful. She was very handsome in her youth and was married to Manick Chandra, a scion of the Chandra dynasty of kings, who reigned in Vikrampur. Manik Chandra latterly reigned in Meherkula (Tippera), the dominion of his father-in-law, which he inherited. He was either a son or a grandson of Suvarna Chandra, whose name we find in the copperplate inscriptions of Çree Chandra Deva of Vikrampur as also in these old Bengali songs.

Manick Chandra according to the prevailing fashion of old oriental monarchs had many wives, these were 180 in number. The song says that his desire for new wives was not abated even by his marrying such a beautiful princess as Mainamati.[1] He next married five young girls of Devapur. When these girls attained womanhood and youthful attractiveness, they began to quarrel with Mainamati.[2] Twelve years had passed since the new wives had come to the royal harem, and Mainamati had lost some of her youthful charms. She was called a sorceress by the young wives and the old Raja sided with his

[1] ময়নাক বিভা করি রাজার না পূরিল মনের আশ।
তার পরে দ্যাবপুরের পাঁচকন্যা বিভা করি পুরি নিল
মনের হবিলায॥

[2] আজি আজি কালি কালি বায় বছর গেল।
দ্যাবপুরের পাঁচ কন্যা ডাহিনী ময়না কন্দল লাগিল॥
দেখিবারে না পারি মহারাজ ব্যাগল করে দিল।
সেই ময়নাক ঘর ব্যন্ধি দিল ফেরুষা নগরে॥
ভাটি হতে আইল বাঙ্গাল লম্বা লম্বা দাড়ি।
সেই বাঙ্গাল আসিয়া মুলুকত কৈল গাড়ি॥

youthful queens and drove her from the palace. After this she lived at a distance from the capital in a place called Pherusa. Mainamati, however, used to pay occasional visits to the king when called upon to do so, but for the most part of the year she led a secluded life in the company of the sage Haripa, who belonged to the lowest caste in Hindu society and earned his living by doing a sweeper's work. The government of Raja Manick Chandra became oppressive as he placed a *Bangal* minister at the head of administration, and his subjects all combined and performed some mystic rites (*abhichar*) by which his life was shortened. On his death it was discovered that Mainamati was *enciente*. Sometime after she was delivered of a male child, who was no other than Raja Govinda Chandra of historic renown. Mainamati married the young prince, a lad of only seven, to Adunā, the princess of Sāvār, who was only five years old at the time. She was daughter of Harish Chandra, the ruins of whose palace are still to be seen in the northern part of the village Sāvār on the Dhaleswari in the district of Dacca. Recently some old bricks have been discovered in that place on which Harish Chandra's name is found inscribed.[1]

[1] We have been given to understand that the inscription referred to, is a forged one. Another inscription the original of which is lost, but a transcript of which is preserved, was published in the Dacca Review some time ago. It gives detailed accounts of the pedigree of Harischandra.

The queen reigned in Tippera over a vast territory comprising a great portion of Eastern Bengal and certain provinces in Northern Bengal near Gour, as regent to her young son. In course of time Adunā grew into womanhood. Her sister Paduna, it should be stated, was also given as a part of dowry to the bridegroom at the time of her marriage.[1] The song edited by Nalini Babu and published by the Dacca Sahitya Parishat says that besides Aduna and Paduna, Govinda Chandra had two more wives one of whom was a daughter of the Khandait chief who was defeated by Govinda Chandra in battle, and the other, a daughter of the 'Oriya king' who according to our belief, as already stated, was no other than the Raja Rajendra Chola of the Tirumalya rock-inscriptions. These two queens were named Ratnamala and Padmamala respectively. Padmamala was sometimes endearingly called *kancha Sona*. But Adunā was the most handsome of all women and the most favourite consort of the king, who was himself one of the most handsome men that lived in India at that period.

When the Raja reached his eighteenth year and was about to take the administration of the kingdom into his own hands, the dowager queen

[1] অদুনাকে বিভা করি পদুনাকে পাইল দানে।"

Mainamati, his mother, expressed a strange determination which I have already stated. She proposed that her son should go away to the forests as a disciple of Haripa, leaving his palace, and lead the life of an ascetic for twelve years. She said that it was ordained by fate that unless Govinda Chandra would do so, he would die in his nineteenth year, which event could be averted by his turning an ascetic and leading such a life for twelve years. The young prince remonstrated. He was not like the great Buddha, inspired by a spiritual ideal, nor like a sage, who convinced of the fleeting nature of things, seeks a higher life in the wilderness. He had just stepped into youth and the world attracted him with all its charm of power and enjoyment as it does ordinary mortals. His wives were devotedly attached to him, particularly Adunā, his chief queen, who virulently protested against her husband's taking to asceticism. She said that she would not be able to bear the pang of separation from him; if he was determined to leave the palace, she must accompany him. When Govinda Chandra pointed out that alone in wildernesses, and strange lands, her beauty would be a source of constant trouble and fear to them both, Adunā replied that she would break eight of her front teeth and thus disfigure her face and cut her flowing tresses so that

she might not be a hinderance or a source of trouble. But the dowager queen said that he must not go in the company of his wife. Her other wish, *viz.*, that the prince should become a disciple of the Hari could not be easily complied with. He was a pariah—a sweeper, who earned his livelihood by a dirty occupation in the public drains. How could a great prince like Govinda Chandra stoop to become a disciple of such a base-born mean fellow? Then came the allegation to which we have already referred. The son told his mother flatly that she had intrigued with the Hari and wanted to remove her son from the palace with the sole object of gratifying her lust freely and without check. We have already quoted an extract to show the nature of this allegation in detail. We, however, hesitate to believe in the allegation. For in all the poems on Mainamati, we find that the country-bards have a great regard for the character of Mainamati, which has served as the chief inspiration of their poetic talents. Had Mainamati been so vile as suggested in the allegation, these bards who are inspired by unspotted purity of the characters they depict, more than anything else, could not have had the same admiring regard for the dowager queen Mainamati. We find in the songs that this allegation was started by the infuriated wives, who were bitterly hostile to their mother-in-law,

as she was to them, and their anger against her reached its climax when all their attempts had failed to save their husband from the fate to which he seemed bound by his mother's resolute determination. The charge against her was probably fabricated by them; there is however no doubt that it was circulated by them. Adunā said to her husband on the eve of his *sannyas*, "Cursed be the person who thus separates wife from husband, destroying the happiness of both. The dowager queen whispers her wishes to the cursed Hari and takes his counsel. She is constantly with him, taking betels offered by him." The last line is full of wicked and immoral suggestions. She continued, "At the words of such a mother, will your head turn, my lord? You are preparing to turn an ascetic." The queens later on made a conspiracy to kill their mother-in-law by poison. They said, "Old persons die everywhere in the world save this wretch." (সকল দেশের বুড়া মরে তোমার মরণ নাই।) They purchased five tolas of poison and mixed it with sweetmeats. "In golden cups they took with them sweet Ganges water. Fine banian fruits and excellent rice they took, besides, baskets full of oranges and other fruits of the season. They prepared *binni* and *chira* with their own hands."

They placed these presents on the heads of servants, and walked to the chamber of their

mother-in-law. The old dowager queen saw them from afar and thought, "The queens at other times come here with looks of wild anger, but why do they come now to me with sweetmeats in their hands? There must be something wicked in their minds, to-day." The four queens in the meantime came to her presence, and offering the cups filled with sugar-balls (in which poison was mixed) and other articles brought by the carriers, they stood before her with joined hands, and bowing to her with an ostensible display of great respect said, "We respectfully pray you to restore our husband to us. We have brought these presents, mother, to please you." The old queen thought, "I am quick enough to see through your motives—I can say how many crocodiles and fishes there are in the sea;—in the dark I can know whether it is a male or female that moves. Now dear souls what kinds of sweets are these? Stay I shall feign death." She remembered her Guru Gorakṣanath and uttering some mystic words taught by him, ate the sugar-balls. The poison produced no serious effects on her. It took her only twenty-two dandas or about eight hours to get rid of the effect of poison entirely. Now recovering herself she thought, "Let me see what the young queens do. I shall feign death." Having resolved thus she shut up all her senses by Yoga, and lay as

one dead. The old hag moreover covered her body with sugar so that ants and flies attacked it as though it was a corpse.[1]

[1] হলাহল হরি বিষ
লাড়ুর মধ্যে দিল।
মুক্তেকে মরিবে হেন
বানিয়াএ কহিল।
পঞ্চ তোলায় পঞ্চ
লাড়ু দিল বানাইয়া।
সুবর্ণ বাটায় দিল
গেলাপ করিয়া।
মহাদেবীর আগে যবে বিষ আনি দিল।
আনন্দ হইয়া চারি পুরে চলি গেল ॥
ঘরে গিয়া লএ বধূ মিষ্ট নারিকেল।
সুবর্ণের ঝাড়ে লএ মিষ্ট গঙ্গা জল ॥
আলাতা চাউল কুলপিত কলা নিল সেবার লাগিয়া।
নারিন্দা কমলা লৈল থাঞ্জায় ভরিয়া॥
শাইল ধানের চিরা লৈল বিনি ধানের খই।
ভাণ্ডার ভাঙ্গিয়া লৈল ভাল মিষ্ট দই ॥
ভেট ঘাট যত বেগারের মাথায় দিয়া।
শাশুরী দরবারে বধূ চলিল হাটিয়া ॥
অন্তরে থাকিয়া মৈনা বধূকে দেখিল।
চরিত্র দেখিয়া বুড়া ভাবিতে লাগিল ॥
আর দিন আসে বধূ উনমত বেশ।
আজুকা আসিতে আছে হাতেতে সন্দেশ ॥
এমত আদর মান কিসের কারণ।
এহি মতে ময়নামতি ভাবে মনে মন ॥
আজুকা বধূর কিছু নাহি বুঝি মন।
হেনকাল চারি বধূ আইল বিদ্যমান ॥
লাড়ুর বাটা সম্মুখে রাখি প্রণাম করিল।
যোড় হস্তে দাড়াইয়া কহিতে লাগিল ॥
এহি বর মাগি মোরা তোমার গোচর।
স্বামী দান দাও মোরা চলি যাই ঘর ॥
যেই ভেট না খাইছ এবার বছরে।
হেন ভেট আনিয়াছি তুহ্মি খাইবারে ॥
আনিছ আনিছ ভেট তুহ্মি তাহা জানি।
তিন কোণ পৃথিবী আমি ঠাঞি বসি গণি ॥

Adunā at this time sent her maids repeatedly to enquire if the wicked mother-in-law was dead or not. When the people of the harem were convinced that she was dead, the daughters-in-law approached her and feeling that there was no breath in her and that her heart did not beat, they congratulated themselves on their success. But before cremation, they gave some slaps on her cheeks and one of them kicked her to her heart's content. They carried the body, which they believed to be a corpse, to the banks of the river Goomty for cremation. The popular belief

আকাশে গণিতে পারি তারা গোটা গোটা।
ছএ মাসের বরিষার জল গণি ফোটা ফোটা॥
সমুদ্রে গণিতে পারি মৎস্য এ কুম্বিরি।
আন্ধারে গণিতে পারি পুরুষ কি স্ত্রী॥
হৈব না হৈব আমি গণিবারে পারি।
ভাল সন্দেশ আনিয়াছ পুত্রের যে নারী॥
* * এত বলি গোর্খ মন্ত্র শরণ করিল।
হস্তে বিষ লৈয়া বুড়া ডাকিতে লাগিল॥
হস্ত পরে বিষ সব করে ঝলঝল।
একে একে পঞ্চ লাড়ু খাইল সকল॥
দাণ্ডাইয়া চারি বধূ হেরিয়া আছিল।
আনন্দ হইয়া সবে পুর প্রবেশিল॥
পঞ্চ তোলা বিষ পুড়াএ খাইয়া বসিল।
দ্বাদশ দণ্ডের মধ্যে বিষ জারণ কৈল॥
বিষ জারণ করি ভাবে মনে মনে।
বুঝিবাম বধূ সবের আদর কেমনে॥
দশদিগের দশ দ্বার ফেলিল বান্ধিয়া।
মৈল করি বুড়া বেটি রহিল পড়িয়া॥
কতখানি গুর দিল অঙ্গত মাখিয়া।
মক্ষিএ পিপড়াএ আসি ধরিল বেড়িয়া॥
ঘন ঘন দাসী পাঠাএ অদুনা সুন্দরী।
মৈল কিনা দেখ গিয়া এ দুষ্ট শ্বাশুরী।

is that if a dead body is burnt on the banks of the Goomty, the person becomes a jackal in the next birth. The good daughters-in-law were not contented with poisoning their mother-in-law, but were actuated by the pious motive of getting her transformed into a jackal in her next birth. It is needless to go on with the tale which describes the baffling of all the devices of the young queens, by the old woman suddenly rising from the funeral pyre like the fabulous Phœnix and asserting herself with all the fury of her tongue.

The wives had also offered a handsome bribe to Brahmin Sandihar wishing him to give false evidence against the dowager queen, but the Brahmin indignantly declined the offer.

When the queen Adunā and her companions could proceed to do such horrible things, we are naturally led to suppose that their allegations against Mainamati's character were false and sprang from a deep-rooted malice. But there are other evidences in this legend shewing that the charge against her might have some grains of truth, however small. In a work called the Goraksha Vijaya which describes some events of this epoch of Bengal-history, we find Pārvati, the wife of Shiva, granting a boon to the sage Haripa, smitten by a desire of woman's love. She said, "You will have a lovely woman for your companion and thus your desire

for love will be satisfied. You say that you are ready to do even a mean sweeper's work, provided you get a suitable lady-love. Go ye to the palace of Mainamati. Take a broom and a spade in your hands. You will find love's embrace there that you desire."[1] (Minacheten, p. 4.) This seems to show that the allegation against Mainamati might not have been fabricated by the queens of Govinda Chandra alone. The popular imagination attempted to exalt the love between Haripa and Mainamati by associating it with a legend in which the great god and his consort are said to have given it their sanction.

Raja Manick Chandra had no faith in the miracles said to have been performed by his queen Mainamati and Haripa. He had a natural dislike for the Yogis, and this we observe when the dowager queen complains to her son against her husband's attitude towards ascetics in general. Some ascetics once visited the palace but "your father, the old Raja, did not give them a fitting reception, nor did he give them alms or presents, so mean and merciless was his conduct."

[1] " চিন্তিলেক মনেতে যে হাড়িফা সিধ্বাই।
কদাচিত এমন নারী আমি যদি পাই ॥
হাড়ি কর্ম্ম করি যদি থাকিতাম পাশ।
তথাপি থাকিবু আহ্মি তাহার সম্পাশ ॥
হাসিআ বলিলা দেবী দিন্থু তোহ্মা বর।
হাড়ি হৈয়া থাক তুমি ময়নামতীর ঘর ॥ "

Whether the imputations against her character were based on truth or were mere fabrications of the young queens, which passed current in the country, and which the poets tried to whitewash, nay to exalt, by composing legendary tales, there is no doubt that Mainamati did not pull on well with her royal husband, when alive, and her intimacy with Haripa was regarded with indignation by his son and daughters-in-law. She might have been actually led by a prophecy in which she believed, to send her son away from the palace as an ascetic, fearing that if she acted to the contrary, Govinda Chandra's life would be shortened; but her quarrel with the queens was a constant source of worry and vexation to Govinda Chandra. And these queens did not at all believe the motive which actuated Mainamati to take recourse to this cruel step against her son as a *bonafide* one. For had Adunā and the other queens believed that their husband would die within a year, and that twelve years of asceticism would guarantee his long life, they would never have been so bitter against his *sannyas*, for in that case the interest of the mother and the wives who really loved him, would have been the same.

The pathos of the tale is centered in the lamentations and importunities of Adunā, the chief queen of Raja Govinda Chandra. Govinda

Chandra had four queens, as we have already stated, but there were many more women in the royal harem. After Govinda Chandra had left the palace and turned an ascetic, one hundred queens of the Raja went to the harem of the Raja's step-brother, Khetu, but Adunā and Padunā returned to their own compartments, bewailing their miserable lot. There they appointed twelve guards and thirteen Police-officers to protect the sanctity of their retirement, and no guest nor even Vaisnava mendicants were allowed access to their quarters. Of this we read in the song of Mainamati collected by Sir George Grierson from Rangpur.

As I have already mentioned, the scene of parting and the importunities of Adunā are full of pathos. Adunā says, " You married me when I was quite young. Love has grown during all these years. What a pleasant occupation it once seemed to you to comb my dishevelled hair with your own hands! For braiding the hair, I have a fillet worth a lakh of rupees, the pendent which serves the purpose of adorning the braid, is also worth another lakh of rupees ; my Meghnal *saḍi* is also of immense value and all these are your presents. The golden anklets you have given to adorn my feet, make a jingling sound, as I walk, and you used to take delight in that. With your own hands you used to put the red mark of luck on my brow. All this

affection you have shown me,—why? To kill me with cruelty? Love, my lord, is a great bond. The stag and its mate live together in the forest, they graze all day in the meadow, when evening comes, they return to their cave. The stag goes ahead and the hind follows his steps. The hind forgets all her pain, as her mate is by her side. You have not my lord even a tithe of that feeling which the beasts of the forests possess."[1]

[1] " তুহ্মি সাত আহ্মি পাঁচ এমত কালের বিয়া।
হীরামন মানিক্য মুক্তা লক্ষ দান দিয়া॥
মোর বৈন পদ্ধনাকে পাইলা ব্যাভার।
ধনরত্ন মোর বাপের আছিল অপার॥
সকল ছাড়িয়া আনিলা ভগ্নিরে আমারে।
ছোটকালের বন্ধু মোরা জানিয়ে তোহ্মারে॥
আপনার হস্তে প্রভু তৈল গিয়া দিলা।
আবের কঙ্কই দিয়া কেশ বিন্যাশিলা॥
লক্ষ তঙ্কার জাদ দিলা চুল বান্ধিবার।
লক্ষ তঙ্কার ঝাপা দিলা পৃষ্ঠের উপর॥
পিন্ধিবার দিলা প্রভু মেঘনাল শারি।
সেই শারীর মূল্য ছিল বাইশ কাহণ কড়ি॥
পায়েতে পিন্ধাইলা রাজা সোনার নূপুর।
হাটিতে চলিতে বাজে ঝামুর ঝুমুর॥
নিজ হস্তে কাম সিন্দুর কপাল ভরি দিলা।
জোড় মন্দির ঘরে নিয়া রূপ রঙ্গ চাইলা॥
এহেন দয়ার বন্ধু কি দোষে ছাড়িলা।
হেন প্রিয়া ছারি কেন বিদেশে চলিলা॥
তোহ্মারে আহ্মারে নষ্ট করিল যে জন।
নষ্ট করুউক তারে প্রভু নিরঞ্জন॥
অহে প্রভু প্রাণনাথ কি বলিলা বাণী।
শুনিতে বিদরে বুক না রহে পরাণী॥
বনে থাকে হরিণী বনে ঘর বাড়ী।
প্রেমের কারণে কাকে নাহি যায় ছাড়ি॥

That Mainamati was the princess of Tippera has been proved by many pieces of evidence. Bhawani Das's song distinctly mentions the names of the places, connected with the chief characters of the poem. Five miles to the north of the town of Comilla, there stands a small hillock known as the Mainamati hills. There is hardly a more delightful spot in the whole district of Tippera. The ranges known as the Mainamati hills, extend over a large tract of meadowy land, of which the level is mostly between 25 to 30 feet above the surrounding lands of the locality. There are occasionally to be seen small plants or dwarfish trees, but the whole tract is almost wholly level, only presenting at times curvatures and sloping undulations on the fringes. This pleasant plateau is a fit dwelling place for a poet—for a king, and certainly for a recluse in its present forlorn condition. One of the elevated spots in this meadowy ranges is called Adunā Mura and another Padunā Mura. The place is shown where the palace of the queen Mainamati stood, and not far from it are visible masses of ruins of Govinda Chandra's palace. The plateau abounds with ruins and

সর্ব্ব দিন চরা করে বনের ভিতর।
সন্ধ্যাকালে চলি যায় আপনা বাসর॥
হরিণা যায় আগে আগে হরিণী যায় পাছে।
সর্ব্বদুঃখ পাশরায় স্বামী থাকে কাছে॥
সেই পশুর বুদ্ধি নাই তুহ্মি রাজার ঠাই।
এতবারে আহ্মি নারী তোহ্মারে বুঝাই॥"

debris, shewing that a powerful king once dwelt in it. We learn from the Nilphamary version of the story, that Govinda Chandra married five girls of Devapur; this is a village which is situated on the north of the Mainamati Hills. On the west of the Hills, the large tract of land is known as perganna Patikara. In the song of Mainamati by Durllava Mullick, and edited by Babu Shiva Chandra Seal, the city of Patika is mentioned as the capital of Raja Govinda Chandra. As therefore we find that nearly all the songs collected from different parts of the country, from Dinajpur, Nilphamary and Tipperah, agree in recording that Govinda Chandra reigned in Tipperah, we can have no hesitation in believing the same to be a fact. As Govinda Chandra possessed extensive landed estates in Northern Bengal, it is not improbable that he had also a capital at Rungpur.

3. *Minachetan or the Song of Gorakshanath.*

The Nath Cult, based on Buddhism—blended with some of the essentials of the Saiva-creed of the 11th and 12th centuries in Bengal, presents a song of unique spiritual value. It is the song of Mina-nath. Though written by

rural poets for the edification of the illiterate classes, it shows strikingly that the higher principles of Buddhist ethics had filtered down to the lowest stratum of Indian communities by the philosophic teachings of the Gurus of that Order. In fact devotion to a *guru* can have no higher illustration than is afforded by that of Goraksanath to Minanath.

The story of Goraksanath.

The story is worth telling, and I believe very few of our countrymen have as yet read or heard it related to them.[1] It is a legendary tale in which the historical element is not altogether wanting.

Minanath was a disciple of the Great God Siva, who had another disciple called Gavur. Once Siva was explaining the great mystic truths of life and death to his consort Parvati. They were seated in a beautiful house constructed on the sea-side, and the solitude of the place and the charming scenery around made the Teacher and the fair listener all attention to each other, as the former confided his mystic knowledge to the latter. But the sage Minanath was there unperceived by the god and his wife. He was then at the bottom of the sea practising

Minanath acquires a knowledge of mystic truths.

[1] These lectures were delivered long ago, when Goraksa Vijoy was little known, but it has since been published and has now reached the hands of many who take an interest in old Bengali Literature.

great *yoga*-austerities and listened to the secret conversation between Siva and Parvati. He thus acquired a full knowledge of mystic truths. In the water Minanath drew a long breath, and the sound was heard by Parvati. She was frightened. Siva perceived that it was Minanath, the sage, who had thus acquired the mystic knowledge, which the Great God and his consort alone knew; the sage had played the part of an eavesdropper, and had come in possession of a power, which no mortals had hitherto been permitted to acquire. The Great God was wroth and pronounced a curse on Minanath saying, "As you have listened to what was spoken to my wife privately, you will fall into the snares of women and lose the knowledge." This curse Minanath never heard, as he was under deep waters.

Parvati asked Siva, "Why do not these sages marry and lead worldly lives like ourselves?" Siva replied, "They are all above passion." The goddess smiled and said, "Put them to test, dear lord, they will melt like wax," and the Great God permitted his wife to put the sages to test. The goddess assumed the form of the loveliest of women on earth and appeared before the sages, Minanath, Haripa, Kathi, Gavur and Goraksanath, one after another. It should be stated here that Goraksanath was a

The test.

disciple of the sage Minanath, about whose unwarranted conduct in the acquisition of the divine knowledge, not accorded to mortals, I have already spoken.

The first four sages named above became smitten with the fire of love as they saw the goddess in mortal charms, and offered their whole-hearted service to her, if she would condescend to favour their prayers. The goddess said to Minanath, "You want a woman as beautiful as myself. Well, I grant you the boon. Go to the palace of the city of Kadali Pattan and you will find sixteen hundred women there, whose queen is as lovely as I am, you will be loved and adored by all these women." So Minanath proceeded towards Kadali Pattan in quest of women. Haripa, the sage, thought within himself at the sight of the goddess in mortal form before his presence, "If such a woman I could get, even were I to do the mean sweeper's work to please her, I would gladly do so." The goddess smiled and said, "Go to the palace of Mainamati. Take a broom in your hand and hang a spade on your back, you will find love's embrace." The third sage Kanupa, thought, "If death comes to me after I have obtained the love of a fair woman as this one, that would not be unwelcome after such a piece of good luck." The goddess granted him the boon that he solicited. The

fourth was the sage Gavur, who thought that if he got such a fair woman to love him, he should be glad even to allow his right hand to be severed from the body if such a sacrifice was needed for it. Parvati granted him what he wanted; he suffered the penalty having fallen in love with his step-mother. Last of all Parvati came before Goraksanath, a disciple of Minanath, who said, "Lovely art thou beyond comparison. But I wish that my mother were as beautiful as you are. How do I wish to be a child again to be nursed by such a mother!"

Goraksanath alone stands the test.

The goddess thus failed to overcome Goraksanath by her charms. She tried a second time, appearing before him in her nudity. This time also she failed. Next she tried to revenge herself on him and devised some wicked means to punish him. But the sage who could resist the greatest of all temptations, had also acquired a knowledge of the mystic art, by which he frightened the goddess who fled from his presence, greatly humiliated. When the Great God heard of this, he smiled and said, "You see Parvati, all are not of the same metal. He has completely subdued his passions. In vain you tried to win him to worldly pleasures." She said in a low tone, "I will try to tempt him again in one of his weak moments and see how he can

resist me." Shiva only said, "Try, Parvati, in whatever way you like, but I tell you, you will never succeed. I know my sage."

Minanath, in the meantime, had started for Kadali Pattan, and having reached the place he saw strangely beautiful women approaching him from all directions. They were all young, all handsome, but the chief of them was Mangala, as the rose is the loveliest among the flowers in a garden. They smiled and glanced at him and talked with him with such sweet familiarity as if they were already prepared to receive him. Mangala, accompanied by her sister Kamala, approached him and said, "Why is this ascetic's staff in your hand, and why have you put shells in your ears like a wretched fakir?" So saying they took away the tiger's skin and gave him rich apparel to wear. They took away the incense *dhuna* and the beggar's bowl and all the other things that a Yogi carries with him. The sixteen hundred women now surrounded him, some began to wave the *chamara* and others fanned him. They offered him a throne and duly installed him thereon, saying "We elect you as our king. This province belongs to us but we are not fit to govern it, as we are women. Take this royal staff, the emblem of authority, and here do we hold the white umbrella over your head." Mangala became

Minanath's fall.

the chief queen. So pleased was Minanath with the enjoyments of his new life at Kadali Pattan, that he was afraid lest some sage, as he once was, should come and take possession of his palace, his kingdom and his fair queens by means of magic art. He accordingly passed orders that if any ascetic or sage entered his capital, he should be immediately executed.

So passed many merry days and Minanath in course of time got a son by his chief queen Mangala. The son was called Vindunath.

Parvati continued to try Goraksanath. A very beautiful woman had by a long course of penances and austerities been trying to please Parvati. She wanted a good husband, and Parvati, one day said to her, "There is a very worthy man for you. It is Goraksanath. Go to him. He will marry you." So the woman came to Goraksanath and said that it was ordained by fate and by the will of the Great God that he should be her husband. "So marry me and fulfil the object of my life." Goraksanath said, "Look at me, maiden, I am above all desire. I have nothing to do with a wife. You have been deceived. It is not in my power to comply with your request. I cannot be bound by any earthly ties." "But I have chosen you as my husband," said the woman, "How can I choose another man? It will tarnish the purity of my maidenhood, if I do so even in

The last trial and Goraksanath's victory.

thought." At this Goraksanath said, "Here is my Karputi, the begging bowl, it is wrought in magic. Wash the bowl and drink the water. By the will of Siva, you will get a son, this boon I grant you. Let your maidenhood remain spotless and ever pure. It will burn lifelong as a holy fire. Thus without coming in contact with man or yielding to desire you will get what is the greatest fortune of a woman, a baby." So the woman was glad and did what she was bidden. She thus got a son, this son was called a Karputinath. The Great God said to Parvati, "He has stood your last test. Trouble him no more. Man can be higher than a god by his renunciation and Goraksanath is such a man. You will add only to your insult and shame if you continue in your mean attempts to try that superior man." Thereupon Parvati ceased her endeavours, convinced that Goraksanath was stronger than all woman's art.

It so happened that one day Goraksanath was in the heaven of Vishnu and he saw Kanupa, the sage, going fast over his head through the air. Goraksanath thought, "This sage is junior to me by many years. How is it that he did not salute me as he passed? He should be taught a lesson in courtesy!" So he ordered his shoes to go and beat him and bring him down to him. The shoes obeyed the sage's order, and forthwith

brought Kanupa down covered with shame and humility before his presence. Goraksanath angrily asked, "How is it that you did not salute me as you passed by me? The insult I do you is not to satisfy my sense of personal wrong, but only to teach you courtesy and manners. For myself, whether any one salutes me or beats me, it is all the same." The junior sage replied, "You cannot command any salute from me, as you treat your Guru with such indifference. He is bound in the snares of women at Kadali Pattan. I saw him the other day. Excessive indulgence in passions has brought on him a premature decay. Isaw his hair all grey, his teeth all gone, his stout and robust body reduced to a skeleton and deep wrinkles imprinted all over his forehead. I then thought within myself how long he could live in the condition to which he had been reduced. Forthwith I visited the region of Death and had a look into his register. I found there that he would live only three days more. Death has already issued his orders to bring him to his regions. What a dutiful disciple are you, O Goraksanath? You are thinking of your own salvation only, whereas your saviour from whom you learned the mystic art of resisting Death, is within his clutches. How can I salute such a self-seeking man?" Goraksanath said, "Excuse me, sage, I have wronged you. I have also

Goraksanath and Gavur.

a message to give you. Your Guru Haripa has been put into a subterranean dungeon by Raja Govinda Chandra, because he made love with the widowed queen Mainamati, the Raja's mother." They each embraced the other for giving information regarding the whereabouts of their respective Gurus. Kanupa started for Meherkula, the kingdom of Govinda Chandra, and Goraksanath for Kadali Pattan.

Comes to Kadali Pattan.

Goraksanath ascended the air and came to the city of Kadali Pattan. He saw the streets all washed by liquid sandal and *aguru* perfumes. The boys played with golden balls. Sandal perfumes were so cheap that they sold for four cowries a *tola*. Each man had a tank of his own, and gold and precious stones were in plenty in the city. Each man had two or three wives and the people drank water from golden cups. As the sage looked around and saw the flourishing condition of the city, he sat for a while under a Bakul tree, which stood close by a beautiful tank. Seated there he mused within himself as to how he could secure information about Minanath, when, a lovely maiden, who had come to the tank for water with a golden pitcher, saw him and was at once enamoured of him.

She approached him and said, "Ascetic, why have you come to this city? Don't you know that Minanath, the king of this

country, has passed orders to the effect that ascetics as a class should not enter his city. If they do, they are to be sentenced to death. If an old ascetic is found in the streets of the city, the Police-officers have been instructed to give such severe slaps on his cheeks that his teeth may break and his face may become wry. If they come across a youthful ascetic, he is at once carried to the execution-ground. If the ascetic is a mere lad, they put him under a grinding stone and crush him to death. You are a young ascetic of attractive looks and hence I take pity on you. If you wish to save yourself from the danger that is imminent, come with me, I will cover you with my *sadi* and hide you from the notice of the royal officers. While walking in the path, we will talk freely on subjects most engaging to young men and women. I will lodge you in the best of my rooms and there we will pleasantly spend our time. I know, my dear, how to weave fine cotton threads. You will prepare clothes with them and sell them in the market. By God's grace, I have considerable wealth. You will find nothing to annoy or disturb you. I like you, because you are so young and handsome."

A woman in love.

Goraksanath cut short her love-speech by saying that he cared not for the comforts she

had described. "But what sort of king," continued he, "is this in your country, who delights in killing the innocent ascetics? I never heard that a king could be so tyrannical. However, maiden, can you tell me how I may gain access to him?" "That too," replied the maiden, "can only be possible if I help you. No man is allowed to enter the palace. The chief queen receives strangers herself, but she will never allow an ascetic like you to enter the palace. If you go alone, you are sure to be taken to the execution ground. I shall hide you and it is with my help that you can expect to be led to the palace." Goraksanath said, "I do not require such help from you, maiden, go to your home and mind your work. The world's pleasures have no attraction for me. In vain, maiden, you allure me with the picture of worldly happiness." "But," said the maiden, "be not cruel, ascetic. I am a woman. Don't turn deaf ears to my prayer. Come and live with me." Goraksanath said, "Pure as ice is my life, bound for a holy cause. Here take the gold bracelets and leave me." Saying so he opened a bag and gave the ornaments to the maid. She thankfully accepted the presents, as they were made by the heavenly artist Visvakarma himself at the wish of the great ascetic and surpassed in brilliancy all articles of human make. She hied her way back,

but turned her head again and again to glance at the youthful ascetic. She broke her golden pitcher and returned to the tank and wept on its bank, thinking that her condition would rouse the Yogi's pity and he would speak to her kindly. The Yogi said, "Why have you, maiden, come back? Your pitcher is broken, here take one from me." Saying so he opened his bag, which by his great occult power, gave him whatever he wanted. The pitcher was of dazzling gold. But the maid said, "I do not want your ornaments, take them back. I do not want the pitcher, take it back. I want you and nothing else." And she wept as she sat by his side. Goraksanath, whom no women could move, rose up and smiling suddenly disappeared and the woman in great surprise regretted that she had not pressed her request by clasping his feet.

So the ascetic came to the palace and standing at the gate sounded his horn.[1] The familiar sound King Minanath heard and it created a strange emotion in his mind. For a moment, his desires were quelled and he lost all love for things around him. Its sound reminded him of a life that he had foregone, a life that stood on the firm rock of will-control and renunciation,

1 মনেতে ভাবিয়া গোর্ক্ষ শিঙ্গাতে দিল সান।
চমকিত হৈল তবে মীননাথের প্রাণ॥

a life which delighted not in the fleeting pleasures but in the solid joy of manly sacrifice and austerity. It was a dream, a joy from heaven, but withal a momentary and passing thought. The next moment he awoke from his reverie and saw lovely faces near him inviting him to the pleasures of an easy life. He said to his queen Mangala, "Who is the ascetic that ventures to sound his horn at my gate? Is it not my order to kill all ascetics who come to my capital?" The queen arose and coming to the threshold of the palace, made enquiries. In the meantime Goraksanath had gone away.

Gorakṣa sounds his horn.

When Goraksanath perceived that his attempts to get an interview with the king in his own ascetic's form would all go in vain, he changed it by his esoteric power into that of the loveliest of women on the face of the earth. He got from Visvakarma, the heavenly artist, all kinds of ornaments to decorate his person. Two attendants of Visvakarma, Nanda and Mahananda, accompanied him in woman's form. He told people that dancing was his profession. On his neck he wore sixteen strings of the finest pearls, and a golden belt adorned with diamonds, he wore round his waist. Golden anklets merrily jingled on his feet as he moved

In the disguise of a dancing girl.

and danced, and people took him to be a lovely dancing girl. Mahananda had a tabor to play upon, and Nanda took a pair of cymbals in his hands.

The dancing girl came to the palace-gate and danced and sang. The sound of the tabor was sweet and distinct. The music spread its spell over the palace and the king asked his chief queen, "Why not order the fair damsel to appear before me? The music comes floating from afar and fills my mind with a dreamy joy." As the queen approached, she was surprised to see the beauty of the dancing woman and dared not bring her to the royal presence, lest the king should take a fancy for her. The queen said, "Take your reward, fair maid, and leave the palace at once. I will give you fine apparel to wear and fill your bag with gold, but no more of your music." The ascetic in woman's garb replied, "No, adored queen, I will not accept any money from you as a favour, if you and the king would not hear our music. I do not take anything that I do not earn. Besides I have enough of riches, I seek glory alone." The queen said, "No, you must at once leave the place," and while the ascetic still persisted, she ordered the guards to drive her away with her attendants.

Driven away.

So Goraksanath was driven away from the inner palace, and he stood at the gate of the

outer. He promised a reward to the gatekeeper if he could lead him with his companions to the king. The gatekeeper said that he did not want money and that it was simply beyond his power to allow a dancing girl to enter the palace when the chief queen herself was against her. Murmured the ascetic, "Never did I hear of a palace where dancing girls are driven like dogs from the doors of the king."

So saying he laid his hand on the mystic tabor, the sound rose clear and distinct, inspired by his heavenly touch. It said, "Awake, O my Guru, Minanath, from the sleep of illusion. You have forgot yourself. You are mighty, you are great, but how little have you become, overpowered by women's charms; awake, my Guru, O my adored, look at yourself, you to whom material forces were obedient, whose power of soul reached its climax mastering the physical world. A weakling you have grown, yielding to lust and passion like ordinary people. You have become a prey to age, to decay. What a pity for this condition of the soul which is unchangeable, omniscient and immortal! Know, my adored Guru, that your life extends to three days more and if you are not restored to your great powers, which you acquired by ages of austerity, by the vision beatific, by supreme bliss,—after three days Death will knock at your gate and these mansions with

their colossal pillars will not be able to resist his approach. Know that you are Minanath, the sage, the Guru of many disciples. You are known as great Matsyendra, and I am your humble disciple, your child, Gorakh. Call me to your chamber. By music and dance I will restore you to your former, to your truer self. I will save you from the wretched condition, to which woman's charm has reduced you." The inspired tabor had clearly and distinctly this burden for its music. The whole palace was filled with the charm of the heavenly music, but none could say what the tabor implied by its irresistably appealing sound. It was only Minanath who understood the music, though even to him its import was half-disclosed and half-concealed, as is the sun in a November morning through the thick mist of the East. The tabor did not cease, the divine musician continuing to inspire, by its high note, the Guru of Gurus, fallen from his great height, till Minanath asked his queens to bring the tabor-player to his presence. Its sound was familiar, yet unfamiliar to him, its burden was a bright sword, rendered unfit by rust and misuse. The dancing girl approached the king with her attendants. She saluted him recognising him to be her Guru, and then she laid her hand on the tabor again. At the sound the whole frame of the king trembled in a fit of

The interview and the gradual change.

strange emotion. The music was sweet as nectar and the king became overpowered by it. The whole palace felt the charm and looked like a painted picture, listening to the music. Nanda and Mahananda kept time with the music, and the tabor-player began to dance in sweet accord and beat the tabor with her left hand. Her steps were so light that she scarcely seemed to touch the ground. The jingling sound of the little gold bells from her belt added new charm and the waving of her beautiful hands suggested strange joys. The tabor was still played upon and it seemed to suggest, "Oh my adored Guru, you have ruined yourself by your weakness. Listen to me, I bow to you as your humble disciple." The player spoke not a word, but implied the above by the sound of his instrument.

Then the king said, "I have seen many a woman, but none so lovely as you; I have seen many a dancing girl but none so skilful as you. Many a sound of tabor have I heard, but none so fascinatingly sweet with mystic suggestions as yours. Tell me who you are. The calling you have adopted to earn your livelihood is not a fit avocation for you. I have two chief queens, Mangala and Kamala, and you will be the third but first in rank and favour. Do not waste your lovely youth in vain, but yield yourself to me and you will be perfectly happy." The dancing girl smiled, and again sounded the tabor; which inspired by

her touch seemed to say, "Subdue your body. It is God's temple, you have desecrated it. O my adored Guru, subdue the body and its desires, it will once more be the holy temple of God, and the talisman of eternal bliss will be acquired by you." As the tabor's sound rose higher and higher, the fair dancer's movement became so quick that she seemed to whirl in the air and the spacious hall of the king became resonant with the musical sound. The king was ashamed and stupefied. He said, "I understand faintly that the tabor has a message for me, though what it is I cannot distinctly understand. But it calls me 'Guru,' this much I am perfectly sure. Why should it address me as 'Guru,' I have only two disciples, one is Goraksanath of unspotted fame and the other Gavur and a third I have not. Why, O dancing girl, do you call me through your tabor 'Guru'? You want to befool me by such a form of address. A Guru's person is sacred and so you wish not to love me and be loved by me. But I am not what I seem to be. Don't take me for an old man unworthy of you. Though I look old, in body and mind I have the vigour of youth. Come fair damsel, to my embrace. Be happy and make me happy."

At this the fair damsel opened her mouth and said, "I am the wife of Goraksanath, he left me immediately after marriage. You are

the Guru of my husband, how dare you accost me in such an ignominious manner ? " Minanath was ashamed and hung down his head in disappointment. He said, " Well, if you are Goraksa's wife, tell me where he is now. A disciple is dearer than a son. I long to see him." The dancing girl, no other than Goraksa himself, said, "If you want him, he will be here in a moment." Then she played on the tabor again. The tone this time was one expressive of deep regret. The sound said, " You cannot recognise me, my Guru, what a pity! It was from you that I acquired my esoteric knowledge, and what a pity that falling into the snares of women, you have so far lost yourself that you cannot recognise me, your disciple, your son. Be your old self again and once more show yourslf in all your power to get rid of the entangling net which the fair creatures have laid for you. Once more know your strength and choose between the trivial and the everlasting." Then Minanath thought that this was no woman but Goraksanath himself. He could not however yet come to a certain conclusion and when the sound of the tabor distinctly addressed him and said, " Know, dear Guru, that I am your disciple. I am Goraksanath," Minanath seemed to have caught fully the sense of the music. He said, " If you are actually my own Gorakh, shew your power,—first that by which a man can rise up

in the air as a bird and dance on the air," and the false dancing girl did as bidden. Minanath again said, "Dance on the water as lightly as a fish sports on its surface. This power belongs to the great Yogi—my own Gorakshanath." The dancing girl did as bidden this time also. The king was now convinced. He said, "I have known thee. Thou art no other than he, such power belongs to no mortal, save my Gorakh. Tell me, my son, the way to save me. I have fallen into women's snares. Their words, their love have completely overpowered me like wine. But listen to me, dear child. Perhaps it will be a vain attempt, I am passed redemption. You need not care for my soul. Go back to your place. These women are all to me and I am happy with them. I do not crave for any higher joy. In some future birth I shall learn how to control the desires of the flesh."

Then Gorakshanath sat near the king and in a sad appealing tone said, "Your span of life is short, it is only three days, but should you awake to your right sense, you may still be saved. What a pity that one over whose head the royal umbrella was unfurled is now a beggar. Such has been your condition, my adored Guru."

Then said Minanath in reply, "Just see, I am the lord of an Empire. 1,600 women love me. What greater happiness does a mortal covet? My own Guru, Siva, has two wives,

Ganga and Gouri. He is happy with them. He has not renounced the world and its pleasures. Why should I do so?" Gorakshanath replied, "Siva is no mortal, nor is he bound by any law of nature. How do you compare yourself with the God of gods? He is with his consorts, true, yet he is not with them, for his soul is absorbed in mystic bliss, as the tall pine entwined with creepers raises its head up in the high heaven, unmindful of and indifferent to the creepers' embrace. Dost not thou, O Guru, see Him everywhere, in all men and in every phenomenon of Nature? He has no separate existence, he is no particular individual, but *all*, not subject to ordinary laws of Nature."

Minanath complained of his weakness; he had grown infirm by age and for a long time had been accustomed to a life of ease. How could he beg from door to door and lead the austere ascetic's life? "How can I now carry a beggar's bowl, wear rags and take in my hands the ascetic's staff?"

Gorakshanath said, "No more, 1,600 women surround you. Behold they are like vultures feeding on a corpse. You have placed your wealth in the care of thieves, you have employed cats to guard your sugar-balls,—you have, as it were, commended the tree to the care of an axe."

"In the place of a broken staff in your hand I find the royal staff, in the place of rags, fine

apparel, for a beggar's bowl—rich gold plates, and these, my lord, may attract ordinary men, but not the conqueror of Death, the great ascetic, who possesses the knowledge of life and death."

"I am your child, your disciple; if you die in three days, woe will be unto me. I cannot leave you and will not leave you." So saying he began to talk on the mysteries of life and death, how the spirit enters the body and the law by which it moves, what it is by which life joins the body and departs from it, who it is that awakes to consciousness after sleep. What is the link between sleep and awakening, between life and death? Where does the soul go when one is in deep slumber? How one becomes manifest in many? How sound rises and where it is eternally preserved? Who is it that sleeps and who is it that awakes? What is the law of heredity and what is the true relation between father and son, between the thirsty and the drink, the hungry and the food, between the flower and its fragrance? Who is it that cries for food and who that gives it? The disciple then discoursed on the theory of creation—slowly but unfailingly leading his Guru once more through those higher paths which Minanath had once traversed, and the memory of which still dimly lingered in his mind, though too much addiction

Discourses on the problems of life and death.

to worldly pleasures had obscured his vision. When once more the forgotten lessons gradually restored him to his lost power—just as the lion, when he breaks his iron chain, feels the reacquisition of his strength and no more yields to the control of others, so did Minanath slowly but surely regain what he had lost. Just as a man rises from his sleep or the sun breaks into light when the clouds disappear, so did Minanath acquire the power which he had once possessed of using the forces of the material world as a vehicle of his will. He saw that self had blinded him, clay now in the shape of flesh and now in the shape of gold had seduced him from the perfect bliss which belongs to the unattached soul. As a giant suddenly rises breaking his fetters and shackles, so did Minanath feel his old strength. Women's charms and entreaties he now counted slender as mere cobwebs and wondered how they could have bound him to earthly pleasures so long. As he was about to leave the palace, the words of the queens fell feebly on his ears, having no longer any power to overpower his reason. They said, "We shall die by the grief of parting. You are a monarch over millions of people, they all admire you. Thousands of men earn their livelihood by serving you. How can you bear the thought that you will live upon others' charity as ascetics do. If they do not give you alms, fasting will be your

lot. You feel hungry in the morning, when dainties are served in gold plates every day, what will you get as your breakfast in the forest? By begging you will get coarse rice and wretched vegetables. How can you live upon them? Behold your palace shines with its gold pillars. There in a milk-white bed you are accustomed to sleep and we your queens are always ready to serve your least wish. A bed of leaves you will get instead. Your guards here with steel armour on and unsheathed bright swords watch the palace night and day, but if you turn an ascetic jackals will be your guards. Accustomed to rich apparels, how can you wear rags? Worms and reptiles will be your companions and they will not be slow in stinging you." A plaintive music, the burden of which were lamentations like these, rose on all sides, but Minanath had left the palace, heedless of them, bent on that life which dies not, nor decays. He took with him his son Vindunath, initiating him into the mystic ways of Yoga. The queens did not stop, but followed him and encircling their lord offered him resistance at every step. They abused Gorakshanath and would not allow him to keep company with their sovereign. But he told them, "You know his life will extend for three days more, if he does not leave the palace and knowing this still do you pursue him like enemies; this certainly is not love which you profess for

him. You obstruct him in his pursuit of higher life and of immortality by your enticements. You deserve punishment. I curse you, leave your human forms and turn bats. You are enemies of the light, live in the twilight of ignorance for ever." So they turned into bats and Minanath with Gorakshanath and Vindunath left the palace. He saw that the doom of death, awaiting him, was withdrawn by the power of Gorokh. Thus was the teacher taught and redeemed by his disciple.

The Guru restored to his former self.

This is the story which is related in detail in a work called the Mina Chetan, but the true name of the book appears to be Goraksha-vijay. The date of copy is 28th Chaitra, 1224 B.S. We find the name of the author in two places in the colophon. He is Shyamdas Sen. But I am inclined to believe that this Shyamdas Sen never wrote the book ; he deliberately suppressed the name of the author and inserted his own name in the place. We have got an older manuscript of this book, it is dated 1185 Maghi. Between the readings of these two MSS., there is not much difference, no more than we ordinarily find in two MSS. of the same work in old Bengali literature. The older MS. belongs to the Calcutta University and was secured from Chittagong. It seems to be the better of the two copies.

The MSS. of Goraksa-vijay.

We have got the MS. complete, though the first page has been blurred by rough handling, but I believe the full text may be recovered with the help of a good magnifying glass. This manuscript gives the name of Sheikh Fatezullah as the author of the book. He is, I believe, the true author, and Shyamdas Sen in a later period tampered with the text in the colophon and put his own name, proclaiming himself to be the author of the work.

These songs of Goraksha and Mainamati were often sung by the Muhammadans of Bengal villages. The song of Mainamati, published by the Dacca Sahitya Parishat, was collected from two old manuscripts, both copied by Muhammadans. They were discovered in the houses of two illiterate Muhammadan villagers. One version of Mainamati songs was composed by Sukur Muhammad.[1] This manuscript is now in the possession of Babu Nalinikanta Bhattashali, the editor of the song of Mainamati, published by the Dacca Sahitya Parishat. He writes, "One striking feature of this class of songs is that they are equally popular among Hindus and Muhammadans." Now comes the question of Fatezullah's share in the composition of the book. Just as the

[1] Since this was written, Sukur Muhammad's version has been published by the Calcutta University.

Muhammadans have often put a cup-shaped cupola or a minaret over a Hindu temple and converted it into a Musjid, so leave Hindu authors, by introducing their own names in the colophon, established their claims on the authorship of books originally written by Muhammadans. There are several reasons for such forgeries being allowed to pass unnoticed and unresented by Muhammadans. The teachings of the Mollas gradually led them to give up their traditional amusements and hereditary callings. So Manasar Bhasan, Mainamati's songs and works like Goraksha-vijay, which not only gave them amusements but formed in many cases the avocation of their lives, lost favour with them, as the subjects of these poems breathing Hindu and Buddhistic ideas, were condemned by the Mollas. The Hindu population gradually took greater interest in these subjects than did their Muhammadan brethren, though in olden times it was quite the contrary case. Thus did a Hindu put his own name in the place of that of the Muhammadan writer, posing as the author of the song of Gorokh. This was not only an attempt at wicked self-glorification, but also an endeavour to obliterate all Muhammadan elements from a book in which the glories of their own Siddhas and gods were sung.

Next we take the liberty to discuss the question why the Muhammadans took an

interest in the songs in olden times, even in a far greater degree than the Hindus. The solution is a very simple one. The Muhammadan converts during the early period of the Muhammadan invasion, were chiefly recruited from the Buddhists of the lowest classes, proclaimed outcasts by Hindu society after the decadence of Buddhist ascendency and the revival of Hinduism. Though these Buddhists had given up their religion and now followed the flag of Islam bearing the insignia of the Crescent Moon, they could not forego those amusements, which had from an early age given them inspiration and in many cases provided means for their livelihood. In Java the native Muhammadans still worship the agricultural deity Laksmi and in Bengal a class of Muhammadans still earn their living by singing songs on that goddess. It is certain that this had been their hereditary calling before they became Islamite converts, a calling which they could not abandon even when the Mollas insisted on a purely monotheistic belief.

Now we come to a further discussion on the sidelight the story of Gorakshanath throws on contemporary history.

I believe the two songs, one on Mainamati and the other on Minanath, were originally composed for the followers of Kalipa and Gorakshanath respectively. Whatever infamy

might be attributed to queen Mainamati by spite or even popular opinion, her character and her great occult power elicited the highest encomiums from those who composed these songs, chiefly because she was a great friend of the Siddha. In the eyes of the followers of the Hari, nothing could stain the fair name of one who was a steadfast friend and admirer of the Siddha,—one who made even her royal son bend his head low and accept the former as his spiritual guide. The religious leader Hari-siddha is extolled by his followers throughout the song of Mainamati. His powers formed the constant theme of exalted praise of the writer of the song. Mainamati says that the Siddha's power was so great that the son of the god Indra himself held the royal umbrella over his head, that he rode the great tortoise and made his hearth on the disk of the moon.

The followers of Gorakshanath in like manner composed this gospel about Minanath to extol their Guru. Haripa and Gorakshanath were no doubt very popular religious leaders. Otherwise why should these songs be sung and admired by thousands of men in the lower Gangetic valley? We have not yet read any poem on Gabur Siddha and Kalipa, the disciples of Gorakshanath and Haripa respectively, but we have many references to their great powers in the legends of Minanath and

also in the Manasar Bhasan written by a poet named Jivan Mitra in the seventeenth century. We are thus led to surmise that there were probably poems written to eulogise these two leaders also. Future research in this field, will, we trust, bring this forgotten lore to light.

Gorakshanath was probably born in the Punjab. For we find him often called 'Jalandhari' in the songs. Jalandhar is a noted place in the Punjab. Wherever he might have been born, there is no doubt that he lived the greater part of his life in Bengal. He was, as described in the song of Minanath, a disciple of the latter. There is certainly this small element of truth in the songs, that he redeemed the soul of his Guru from the perdition of lust and passion to which it had fallen a prey, by his earnest appeal and persuasive eloquence. This tradition forms the very backbone of the songs, and seems to have been founded on fact, Gorakshanath sojourned for a time in Western Bengal or the Raḍa Desa. If he did not actually establish the image of Kali in Kalighat, he was certainly associated with the image in some way or other, if we are to believe in the tradition recorded in the work of Goraksha-vijay or Mina Chetan. This is a very important point to which the Bengali songs give us a clue and may be investigated from other sources. Gorakshanath latterly found that a man was

daily sacrificed at the altar of this Kali by the people around. It appears that he put a stop to human sacrifices. The other two disciples of Gorakshanath were Haripa and the queen Mainamati herself. Mainamati's son Raja Govinda Chandra fought with Rajendra Chola of the Tirumalay rock inscriptions in the year 1024 A. D. Gorakshanath was certainly an old man when he admitted the child Mainamati as his disciple. So Gorakshanath lived nearly a century before that date. We thus come to the conclusion that Gorakshanath lived in the latter part of the 10th century.[1] If the image of Kali was established by Gorakshanath, it is also to be attributed to that period. Gorakshanath was a Tantrik Buddhist and one of the illustrious leaders of the Nath religion, which seems to be an offshoot of Mahayana Buddhism. If our theory that Gorakshanath was a native of the Punjab be true, then we can easily account as to why the image of Kali at Kalighat counts so many worshippers amongst the upcountry people. In fact the name Calcutta has sprung from the distorted pronunciation of the word 'Kalighat' by North-western men. It used to be called 'Kalghatta' by these people and Calcutta is only a softened

[1] The date of Gorakshanath is a disputed point and there are wild legends that have gathered round him some of which carry him to the 6th century and others to various dates ranging between the 9th and the 14th.

form of this word. On the last page of a work called 'Padmavat' by Alowal, copied more than a hundred years ago by a Muhammadan of Chittagong, we find the name of Calcutta written as Calghatta. This manuscript is to be found in the library of the Calcutta University.

We find in the song of Mainamati, published by the Dacca Sahitya Parishat, that Gorakshanath stayed in Bengal and the neighbouring provinces for a period of twelve years and during his trip from East to West, halted for a time in Tippera, where he was struck by the beauty and devotion of the princess Mainamati, then only a girl. It is also stated in the songs that in order to initiate her into his mystic religion, he took her to Vikrampur. There he founded the Yogir Ghat. This *ghat* is no longer in existence, having been swallowed by the Dhaleswari. It once stood at the confluence of the two rivers Brahmaputra and the Ichchamati to the north of Munsigunj.

We do not mean to say that all these are genuine and unassailable historical facts. From extravagant and legendary tales, we have obtained these materials, which should be tested by historical lights thrown by more definite and reliable sources. When we have some substantiation of these accounts from more authentic sources then only shall we be in a position to accept them as historical evidence. So long

we do not get such confirmation, all judgment should be suspended and we should be contented by merely recording the traditions of the people, which though often extravagant sometimes rest, more or less, on historical foundations.[1]

ON CHANDIDAS.

New facts have recently come to light regarding Chandidas, the famous poet of Bengal. The mound which is believed to have once been his homestead, is a stupendous heap of old bricks and debris, shewing that there was once a large building on the site. Coins have been recovered from the mound, which are traced so far back as the Gupta times. It is evident that the building of which the mound contains relics, was the temple of Vasuli Devi; Chandidas, as befitting the position of a Brahmin scholar, might have had a cottage near the temple and within its compound and the whole site is now associated with his name, because of the celebrity he

The site at Nannur.

[1] That Gorakshanath was once a very popular saint in Bengal is illustrated by the fact that in the 16th century, our celebrated poet Govinda Das made his hero Krishna appear before Radha in the attire of a Yogi who sounded his horn in the name of Gorakshanath. This shews that even in the sixteenth century an ordinary ascetic when begging alms recited the name of Goraksha as in our own times the Vaisnava mendicants recite the name of Chaitanya or Krishna while begging alms.

latterly achieved as a poet, devotee and scholar. I recently contributed an article to the Bengali journal, 'Bharatvarsa,' the purport of which was noted down by our poet, Mr. Akshoy Chandra Baral for use in his drama on Chandidas and also by Babu Basanta Ranjan Roy, editor of the Krisna Kirtan, for incorporation in his introduction to that book. In that article, I have briefly stated the results of the research made at Nannur by the Raḍa Research Society. One of the scholars engaged in research into the vexed question of Chandidas's birthplace and other important points bearing on his life has mentioned to me the following tradition about him collected from the village Nannur itself.

Chandidas not only composed songs but sang them with a devotional fervour which made a great impression. He organised a party of singers and wherever he went, drew a large number of admirers, who were almost maddened by the charm of his music and songs. It so happened that he was once invited to the palace of the Nawab of the locality and there sang some of his exquisite songs. All present there, turned admirers of his songs, but none appreciated them so greatly as the Begum Sahiba herself. From that day forward wherever Chandidas's party sang songs on Radha-Krishna love, the Nawab's Begum went incognito in

order to listen to the music of the party, and above all, to hear Chandidas's divine songs from his own lips. This could not be checked though the Nawab used all gentle persuasion to bring his Begum under his control.

The last song.

One evening Chandidas was singing his songs aided by the chorus in the compound of the Vasuli Temple at Nannur. The audience sat like painted pictures, all attention to the gifted singer. He was singing one of those songs, in which Krishna's return to Vrindavan was presaged. "Radha knew that he was coming, nobody told her of it. Her good luck whispered the glad tidings into her ears. The day had dawned favourably. It was not like other days. The morning air was sweet, and the sun's rays were pleasant and warm. She perceived the approach of the divine flute-player in the waving of her own hair,—perchance inspired by the motion of his approaching steps ; she perceived his approach in the gentle swinging of the necklace on her breast, the heart had perchance known of the approach of her lover, and the necklace moved because the heart throbbed. The hem of her garments flew wildly in a particular direction, perhaps to embrace the air touched by his person. The left eye, the left limbs throbbed—decided signs, according to Hindu astrology, of the acquisition

of a fortune. On other days like a mad woman, she would enquire about her lover of the crows flying past her house. The crows, surprised at her foolish importunities, would fly away. But to-day as she made her enquiries as usual they all sat near her and looked at her quietly.[1] She knew that this was also a good sign. As on otherdays to-day too, she went with her offerings to the temple. As she saw the image of the god there, a flower dropped from his head and fell on her hands. This shewed that the diety was pleased and the flower was his blessing."

According to a tradition that I heard elsewhere, this was the last song of Chandidas.

The audience felt with the singer that some One was approaching, dearer to them than every thing of this world. They were absorbed in the devotioral fervour breathed in the song. Neither the singer nor those who heard him, were conscious of the world outside the temple. When, lo, cannons roared

[1] আজি কুদিন সুদিন ভেল।
মাধব মন্দিরে আওব তুরিতে কপাল কহিয়া গেল।
চিকুর ফুরিছে, বসন খসিছে, পুলক যৌবন-ভার।
বাম অঙ্গ আঁখি সঘনে নাচিছে, দুলিছে হিয়ার হার।
প্রভাত সময়ে কাক-কোলাহলি, আহার বাটিয়া খায়।
পিয়া আসিবার নাম শুধাইতে উড়িয়া বসিল তায়।
মুখের তাম্বুল খসিয়া পড়িছে, দেবের মাথার ফুল।
চণ্ডীদাস কহে, সব সুলক্ষণ বিধি ভেল অনুকূল।

and fiery balls struck the walls and in a moment the temple crumbled to dust crushing the singer with his party and their listeners to death. The Begum lay confined by the Nawab's orders in the prison of the palace, and he, for whom she had felt a holy passion, was silenced for ever in his strange burial,—under the broken walls of the temple.

The cannonade.

This is the tradition current in the locality in which the poet lived. Skeletons of men are now and then found when portions of the mound are dug, shewing that the tradition rests on some fact of the nature described above.

Hitherto all writers have described the death of Chandidas as occurring not at Nannur where the poet earned his livelihood as a priest of the Vasuli Temple, but at Kirnahar, a village close to Nannur. The tradition of Kirnahar is that Chandidas was singing his songs in the mansion of a rich man of that place when the whole building collapsed through an earthquake or some other cause and Chandidas was buried alive. The people of Kirnahar point out the relics of the building in a particular spot and consider it sacred owing to the tragic end of the great poet. The people of Nannur up to now have taken little or no interest in Chandidas. They were perhaps too confident of their village being the

Traditions of Nānnur and Kirnahar.

chief seat of Chandidas's activities, to believe seriously that other villages would come forward to lay any claim on Chandidas. But the advancement of such claims is no new feature in the history of great men since "Seven wealthy cities claim for Homer dead, through which the living Homer begged his bread."

Late Samindra Nath Tagore, son of Dr. Ravindra Nath Tagore, a young lad, who gave promises of a great career but died prematurely, travelled for a while in the Bankura district and gathered some traditions about Chandidas. He wrote to say that it was believed by the people of a certain locality of that district that Chandidas was born at the village of Chattna within its jurisdiction and that he subsequently settled at Nannur as a priest of the Vasuli temple. There is a temple of Vasuli also at Chattna, though the deity there is not as famous as that of Nannur. But Babu Nilratan Mukherji, compiler of the edition of Chandidas published by the Sahitya Parishat of Calcutta, writes in his preface that he is not willing to credit this information. But all the same I feel it my duty to record all the traditions that have come to my knowledge regarding Chandidas, in order to make my article on the poet up-to-date and complete.

Chattna.

Babu Basanta Ranjan Roy, editor of the Krisna Kirtan, belongs to a village close to Chattna. He tells me that

the tradition of the place is that Chandidas was born in his maternal uncle's home at Chattna. A site is pointed out there, which is said to mark the home of the poet's childhood. One may suppose that because there is a temple of Vasuli there, the people associated the goddess with Chandidas and invented a story, for Chandidas pays his regards to that goddess in the colophons of many of his songs. But Vasuli in the good old days was a very popular deity and there was hardly any village of importance in those days that had not a temple dedicated to Vasuli, or its *Vasuli-tala* where people worshipped her. Owing to the present flourishing condition of the village Kirnahar, where there are many rich and enlightened men, the traditions current in that place have been made much of by some of the modern writers, and Babu Nilratan Mukherji who lived for a long time in that village in touch with its influential people, was naturally prejudiced in favour of the local traditions. Still he could not help recording that in Nannur itself there was a tradition that Chandidas was crushed to death in that village in the Vasuli Temple as it gave way all on a sudden.

Now let me make a summary of the traditions current at various places in the Birbhum and Bankura districts on this point, and arrive at my own conclusions from them.

The people of Nannur say that Chandidas died accidentally not at Kirnahar, but at Nannur

itself. They say that the tradition of Kirnahar is of a quite recent growth and was created by some people there to glorify their own village. Similarly the tradition of his death at Matipur, a village near Nannur, also seems hardly worthy of credence. All traditions, however, agree in stating that Chandidas met with his death in a tragic manner.

The tradition of Nannur seems to be more reliable, as the broken temple is now indicated by the mound known as Chandidas's *bhita*. About five hundred years ago, Chandidas died, and according to the tradition the image of the goddess Vasuli along with the poet, his party and the audience lay buried under the temple. This is partially proved by the fact that Vasuli Devi was recovered from the debris and old bricks of the mound about 150 years ago by a man of the Teli caste. His descendants still have the right of offering the first goat as sacrifice to the goddess on the Navami Puja day. This privilege they have enjoyed ever since the recovery of the image by their ancestor. As mentioned above, human skeletons are found underneath the mound when it is dug. All these indicate that the Nannur tradition has some foundation in fact.

We simply record the tradition of Chandidas's birth at Chattna without any comment. In like manner we feel it our duty to mention that there is also another curious tradition current in

a quite different locality referred to in an article published in the Bengali magazine, 'Birbhum' in its issue of Sravan, 1309 B.S. It says that Chandidas was born at the village Uchhait in the Mazzaferpur district. A gentleman wrote in the Someprakash, 10th Poush, 1280 B. S. that Chandidas's father was one Durgadas Bagchi, a Varendra Brahmin, and that he was born in 1309 Saka and died in 1399 Saka; another writer states that he found in an old manuscript dated 1373 Saka, a passage in which it is written that Chandidas's father was Bhavani Charan and her mother's name was Bhairavi Sundari. Babu Shivaratan Mitra evidently follows this statement in his Sahitya Sevaka. All such informations, we must say, are not worthy of credence, so long as definite proofs are not forthcoming to substantiate them. There is a reference in one of the poems ascribed to Chandidas that he got his poetical inspiration from the goddess Vasuli in a village called Shaltora in the district of Bankura. Among all these traditions and fables bearing upon the life of our poet, we may take the following points as established facts.

He lived for a long time in the village of Nannur and was associated with the goddess Vasuli in many ways. This we find mentioned in most of his own poems. He loved a washer-woman and suffered social ostracism for a while on that account. To these sure

facts, may be added the quite reliable tradition that his musical party met death by the fall of Vasuli temple, cannonaded by the infuriated Nawab of the locality. He had a brother or cousin named Nakul. In the juvenile poems of Chandidas, such as the Krishna Kirtan, we find that Chandidas had another name,—it is Ananta.

Interview between Vidyapati and Chandidas.

Next we should refer to the story relating to the interview between Chandidas and Vidyapati. There are so many songs prevalent in the country, some of which are embodied in the Pada Kalpataru, dealing with this interview, that we have no doubt that the tradition is founded on fact. The songs say that Chandidas heard of the fame of Vidyapati and the latter also heard of the reputation enjoyed by his great contemporary. Vidyapati came down from Mithila probably in the company of Raja Siva Simha, called in the songs 'Rupanarayan' and met Chandidas on the banks of the Ganges. This may suggest that the latter poet was the older of the two. Their conversation was chiefly on the tender emotions of the human heart. Chandidas asked Vidyapati, "Love in some cases is induced by the passions of the flesh and in others induces passions. Which of the two is the nobler and why?"[1] It is certain that

[1] "রতি হৈতে প্রেম, প্রেম হৈতে রতি, কিয়ে কাহে মানিব অধিকা ? "

Vidyapati survived Chandidas by many years. There is no doubt that Vidyapati was blessed with a long life extending over a century. We find it mentioned in the work Advaita Prakash by Ishan Nagar that Advaitacharya in his youth went to Mithila and paid a visit to Vidyapati about the year 1460 A.D. Chandidas was a Bengali poet and a Vaisnava; had he been living at the time, Advaita must have interviewed him. But nowhere in the exhaustive biographies of Advaitacharya and of his contemporary apostles of Vaisnavism, do we find any mention of any of those apostles coming in a personal contact with the gifted poet of Nannur. Chaitanya himself sang the songs of Chandidas enthusiastically aided by a chorus in which Svarup and Ramananda Roy also played their part. If the doubtful meaning of the enigmatic lines—"বিধুর নিকট নেত্র পক্ষ পঞ্চবাণ। নবঁহু নবঁহু রস ইহ পরিমাণ" which suggest that in the year 1403 A.D. Chandidas had composed about 996 songs, be discredited, we have certainly a surer proof of the time in which he lived in the fact that he was a contemporary of Vidyapaty, the Court-poet of Raja Shiva Simha, who ascended the throne of Mithila in 1400 A.D. It is also an established fact that he had died before Advaita and other apostles of the Chaitanya-cult, such as Narahari Sarkar. (Advaita was born in the year 1433 and Narahari Sarkar was his friend

and contemporary.) We may thus take it for granted that Chandidas was born towards the middle of the 14th century and died at the beginning of the next.

Other legends.

It is proved from his poems that he was a Sākta, for, being a worshipper of Vasuli, he could not be anything else. From Sāktaism he became a preacher of the Sahajiyā cult and a poet of Radha-Krishna songs. The Krishna-cult in the Sahajiyā form was associated with Tantric rites and it is not perhaps correct to suppose that he was an out-an-out Vaiṣṇava, for no Vaiṣṇava would subscribe himself as a worshipper of Vasuli in the colophon of his poems as he did. His Radha-Krishna songs, he says, were inspired by the Mother as was his love for Rami, the washer-woman. If he was a Vaiṣṇava, it was a very peculiar form of Vaisnavism that he preached, as we find it described in his Sahajiyā songs.

We read in several poems that his love for Rami, a low-caste woman, caused his excommunication from the Brahmin society. He was declared to be fallen and an outcast, and this was proclaimed to the neighbouring villages by the beat of drum.[1] We also find that many of his friends who loved him and admired his scholarship

[1] "ঢক্কা নাদে অপবাদ গ্রাম গ্রামে দেয় হে।
চোখে না দেখিয়া মিছা কলঙ্ক রটায় হে॥"

attempted to dissuade him from his ill-fated love—especially Nakul, who was probably his brother or cousin and a very influential man. Chandidas was asked to cut off all connection with the low-caste woman, and at the intercession of Nakul, the Brahmin community agreed to re-admit him into society. A feast was arranged and they all agreed to dine with Chandidas, on his giving them a promise not to have anything to do with the washer-maid in future. The dinner, we find in the poems, was an exceedingly rich one, the names of very strange sweetmeats such as '*sitamisra*,' '*alfa*' etc., are mentioned in the list. The Brahmins assembled at the house of Chandidas in due time, and Nakul was busy in receiving them. Meantime Rami heard that Chandidas was going to be taken back to his caste on the promise of forsaking her for ever. She wept for a long time and being unable to support her grief, came near the Bakul groves adjacent to Chandidas's home. As she saw the Brahmins with Chandidas about to sit for dinner, she came forward and without paying any attention to the scholarly assemblage, fell at the feet of Chandidas, saying, "Is it true that you will leave me for the sake of caste?" Chandidas whose wits turned at the sudden appearance of his lady-love, replied with tears that he never dreamt of doing

Rami—the washer-woman.

so and embraced her in deep love. But as the Brahmins in deep rage approached Chandidas to reprimand and denounce him, a strange sight met their eyes. With two arms Rami embraced Chandidas, but they beheld two arms more, the hands forbidding them to take any violent action against her lover. This sacred and mystic signal convinced the awe-struck assemblage that Rami, the washer-woman, had a spark of the power of the divine Mother and they bowed down to her.

Whatever this tradition embodied in the old songs may signify, it is clear that the faults of a great genius, his eccentricities and excesses are all excused in the eyes of people, if not during his life, at least immediately after he passes away from the world. In a country like India, where spiritual and religious ideas permeate all human action, traditions like the above are a quite natural growth. In the eyes of the Vaisnavas the divine songs of Chandidas became an inspiring source of devotion and when Chaitanya himself sang them, day and night, the poet was glorified in their eyes, and it was but natural for them to attempt to remove the scandal about his private life by elevating Rami to the rank of a goddess.

Stories.

We have stated many facts and traditions about Chandidas. There are one or two more, which I find it necessary to record here, in order to

render my account complete. It is stated that Chandidas as a Sākta collected some flowers from the river that flowed past the Vasuli temple and made an offering of them to the feet of Vasuli. That night Vasuli appeared to him in a dream and said, "Chandidas, you have not acted rightly by offering these flowers to my feet. Visnu was worshipped with them. They should have been placed on my head." Chandidas knew from this that Visnu was a superior deity and hence renounced the worship of Vasuli and turned a Vaisnava. This legend seems to be quite unreliable as Chandidas never gave up the worship of Vasuli, which is proved by the fact that he never omitted to pay his respects to that goddess even in his Radha-Krishna songs. Another tradition says that before he fell in love with Rami, he happened to go one day to market to buy fish. The fisherwoman gave a greater quantity of fish for the same price to another man and Chandidas having asked the reason of this, the woman said, "His case is quite different. We love each other." Chandidas stood for sometime absorbed in thought and then murmured, "Since love is so sweet, I must love a woman." This is said to have happened a short time before he fell in love with Rami. These are some of the facts and traditions about Chandidas's life that have already appeared in print or what I could gather from local sources.

Some of these will be found in my 'History of Bengali Language and Literature' and in works by other writers. But I have incorporated all new and old materials in one place in this paper since, as I have already stated, I want to give completeness to this article on Chandidas.

"The Sahaya Yana."

The best exponent of the later form of the Sahajiya cult was Chandidas. What the 'Sahaja Yāna,' at least the form it latterly took in Bengal, was, no body has yet been able to clearly define. It was originally one of the cults of the Mahayana Buddhism. In the writings of the earlier Sahajiyas, the theory of Void is sometimes met with. Kanu Pad, Lui, Shanti Deva and other writers of the cult who flourished in the 9th century of the Christian era, seemed to imply a form of non-dualistic theory to be the first principle of the Sahajiya cult. The worship of woman, which latterly occupied such a prominent place in the theology of the Sahajiyas, is not very clearly traced in the writings of this school of the 9th century.

It is stated in the Jnanadi Sadhan Tantra that a woman of the Chandal caste, along with those of other nine different castes, is a fit object of worship. If woman-worship was an essential doctrine of the cult at the time of Bhusuka, as it was in later times, he was right in adopting a woman of the Chandal caste for that purpose.

An annotator calls all the Sahajiya writers, whose poems have been collected from Nepal, Bengalees. In one or two cases he may be right, but in many cases his position is untenable. In the line quoted above Bhusuka clearly says that he became a Bengalee by adopting a woman of the Chandal caste for his mistress. This shews that he himself was not a Bengalee, but the Chandal woman being so, he became a Bengalee owing to his connection with her.

It appears, however, that love for women, instead of being an object of glory to these writers, caused their remorse and they thought that it had impeded their spiritual progress. Thus Bhusuku regrets that his love for the Chandal woman has destroyed his দিবি (দিবা) সংজ্ঞা (জ্ঞান), celestial vision, that the Tree of Void has been uprooted, that he knows not where he can have a landing place under the influence of this love and that though he is greatly happy in his domestic life, his store which was worth only four cowries, has been all stolen, so that life and death to him are now welcome alike. Sararuha Vajra similarly regrets that taking a mistress in Bengal he has lost all his wisdom. We, however, do not take note here of the metaphysical interpretation given to this matter by commentators. Surely these songs are not on the lines of Chandidas's glorification of love for Rami—the washer-woman, yet there is an

element in this allusion to their beloved ones, which seems to presage a future development of love as a spiritual factor. The line ন জানমি চিত মোর কাহা গিয়া পৈঠা of Bhusuka suggests that the lover does not know where this love would lead his soul to, it might be to bliss or to woe. Of course there are lines of other writers of this period, in which one hears the distinct ring of later Vaisnava songs. For instance the lines of Dhammapada, in the collection by Mr. Shastri, জোইনি হুঁ তুহুঁ বিন্নু খনহ ন জীবমু। তোমুহ চুম্বি কমলরস পিবমি "Oh, young lady, I cannot live for a moment without thee. When I kiss thy face, I feel as if I were drinking honey from the lotus." This, as he says, is an unmistakable precursor of Vaisnava songs. Regret for loss of spirituality under the spell of woman's love is not altogether absent in Chandidas's writings. He refers in one of his songs to his love for Rami and says, শুন শুন দেবী, তোমা আমি সেবি, বিফল সকলি মোর। পুন্য ধর্ম্ম গেল মোক্ষাদি সকল, চরণ না পেনু তোর। "Hear me, oh goddess (Vasuli), I worship thee, but in vain. My virtues are all lost, and my salvation is far off, I am not worthy of thy feet." In another song he says, [1] "Chandidas does not possess true knowledge. How can he cross the ocean of the world? He was born

[1] দ্বিজ চণ্ডীদাস না জানয়ে তত্ত্ব কেমনে হইবে পার।
উত্তম কুলেতে লভিয়া জনম নীচ সহ ব্যবহার।

in a high family, but he is addicted to one of low caste." This is surely on the lines of Bhusuku and Dhamma. But we shall presently see how he gradually gives up all regret and becomes glorified in his own estimation, convinced of the virgin purity of his heart and of that devotion which leads the soul to the realm of beatitude.

The dawn of love.

How Chandidas first saw Rami and fell in love with her is graphically described in his own poems.[1] 'At Avantipur, I was reading as a student, when one day I saw a maid; she seemed to be the image of sweetness. Her manners were full of attraction such as could charm even Cupid. She occupied my whole thought and her merry and playful disposition stirred my imagination. I thought it was a sin on my part to think thus of a woman and determined to drive her from my mind, but lo, as I endeavoured to do so, my love for her instead of diminishing gradually......

[1] বসিঞা অবন্তীপুরে পড়ুয়া পঢ়ণ পড়ে।
হেনকালে এক রসের নায়বা দরশন দিল মোরে॥
সে চাহিল আমার পানে তায় হানিল মদন-বাণে।
সেই হৈতে মন করে উচাটন ধৈরয না মানে প্রাণে।
সে যে রসের পুতলীবালা
তার মদনমোহন লীলা।
চেতন সহিত মনোরথে করএ বিবিধ খেলা।
পাপ ভয় করি মনে
তারে ছাড়িতে চাহি যেমনে,
বাড়িল মদন করিল রমন যাপল রমনী সনে
সে জগত জননী উমা রাখিতে নারিল আমা
দেখিয়া সেরূপ নবীন পিরীতি জাতি কুল দিল সীমা
যত মনে করি বারা তবু রজক রমণী সারা
চণ্ডীদাস বলে নবীন পীরিতি জীয়ন্তে হইলাম মরা

increased, and I spent a night with her. She, the mother of the universe, could not prevent my fall. The beauty of the girl so possessed me, that my caste and social status I did forego for her sake. As often as I tried to give up all thought of her, I found that the washerwoman occupied my whole heart. Says Chandidas, "It is the dawn of love; under its impulse though I am living, I am one as dead." The line of Bhusuku 'জীয়ন্তে মইঁলে নাহি বিশেষ' and Chandidas's line 'জীয়ন্তে হইলাম মরা' seem to convey the same spirit.

I make a further extract from Chandidas to shew the gradual development of this love. You will, gentlemen, see how mundane love was gradually spiritualised and how in the place of regret, absolute confidence in the purity of his cause, possessed him.

[1] "The next day, in determined attitude, I sat in the temple to worship the goddess (Vasuli).

[1] তার পর দিন দেবী আরাধনে বসিলাম যতন করি।
অই শুভ দিনে দেবীর আঙ্গিনায় পেখলু গোরী ॥
হায় মন চলি গেল কেন।
দেখিয়া সেরূপ নবীন পিরীতি স্মরণ লইলা যেন ॥
"শুন শুন দেবী, তোমা আমি সেবি, বিফল হইল মোর।
পুণ্য ধর্ম্ম গেল, মোক্ষাদি সকল, চরণ না পেলাম তোর ॥"
দেবী কহে পুনঃ, শুনহ বচন, বিরোধ না বাস তুমি
বহু ভাগ্যের, উদয় শুভের, যোল বলে জানি আমি ॥
জনম সফল, জরামৃত্যু গেল, ঘুচিল যতেক দায়।
হরিহর ব্রহ্মাদিক যে কথা ধেয়ানে নাহিক পায় ॥
পিরীতি রতন, করিবে যতন, আমার বচন মানি।
ভজ শুদ্ধ রতি, স্বরূপেতে স্থিতি, প্রেম অনুসারে গণি ॥

In the compound of the temple, that glittered with gold, I saw the fair woman again. Alas, why did my mind go after her? As I saw her, my love was rekindled.

I said, 'Hear me, oh goddess, oh mother, I have served thee long, but all in vain. My virtues are all lost and with them all hope of salvation I am unfit for worshipping thy feet.' Then the goddess seemed to speak to me. I heard her order distinctly. She said, 'Do not worry yourself, child. By the mystic power of Yoga that is in me, I prophesy, it is a special piece of good luck that has brought this love to your soul. Your life is blessed;—you are now above death and above all human ills. You will acquire a knowledge of those higher truths by this love, which even the gods Vishnu and Brahma have not attained by their meditation. Culture pure love which never decays unspotted by the excitement of passion. Know that thern can be no higher revelation to the soul than what is attained by such love. Stick to it and if you have to give up the worship of a number of gods and goddesses like me, it will not at all matter.' Chandidas says, 'This is the natural course.

ইহাকে নাহি সারাৎসার জানিবে জগৎ মাঝে।
আমি হেন কত দেবী দেবা গেলে কি করে তোমার কাজে॥
চণ্ডীদাস কএ, এই সত্য হয় সভাব স্বরূপ দেহা।
বাশুলী বচন সত্য মনে জানি ধোবানি সঙ্গতি লেহা॥

The words of Vasuli, I obeyed, and I loved the washer-woman, knowing that they were true."

The Sahaja-yan, as I have already stated, was a sort of non-dualism resting principally on the theory of the Void. The link has not yet been found to connect the worship of women with this system of Buddhistic theology. Somehow or other it became associated with sexual love verging on worship, which is found so clearly and elaborately in Chandidas's poems. We also find in the earlier writings of the Sahajiya sect a faint echo of such love. This became doveloped in course of time and its origin, as I have said elsewhere, is to be traced in the monastic life of the Buddhists. The Buddha was quite unwilling to open the portals of his monastery to women. He was however persuaded to do so in the case of his aunt, Mahaprajapati, chiefly by the importunities of his favourite disciple Ananda. But when he gave final permission to admit women into the monasteries, he was sad and said to Ananda, "Just as the worm *Svetastika* destroys crops, so will this admission of women into my monasteries result in the destruction of our Sat Dharma. Its glory, that would have otherwise lasted for a thousand years, may now barely last for five hundred years." He dreaded the free mixing of men and women in the

monasteries, and, anxious for the safety of his religion, laid down certain healthy and stringent rules for monastic life. A Bhikṣu was not permitted to see a Bhikṣuni while she was alone. Even for the purpose of teaching or giving medicines, a Bhikṣu was not allowed to see a Bhikṣuni in her private chamber. The teachers were to give instructions before the whole assembly of Bhikṣunis, and in no case was a Bhikṣu permitted to walk with a Bhikṣuni alone, or go to a river in a boat in the company of a Bikṣuni, when others were not present. These hard and fast rules laid down by the great Buddha himself are embodied in the Pati Mokshya, Chulli Bagga and other works.

The Bikṣus and the Bikṣunis.

But nature takes her course inspite of all stringency of opposition. The small roots find loop-holes in rocks to spread themselves, and even stone cannot supress the growth of a plant. So long as Buddhism was at the height of its glory, the rules of the Buddha regulated the lives of the Buddhist celebates. Some of the women admitted into the monasteries, gave undoubted proofs of their lofty character, great talents and saintly piety. Among these we may mention Chala, Upachala, Shîshupachala, Sanghamitra, Uppalvan, Kundal-Kesha and Amula. These women of spotless purity of

character and superior moral sense really upheld the glory of the monastic life. But in course of time human flaws and foibles entered the monasteries, and the great respect which the Buddhists paid to their Gurus, the spiritual heads, was tainted with sexual relationship of a questionable character opening new channels for Cupid's activities. The Guru's order was more sacred than the oracle of Delphi, and when he expounded the doctrine that it was no sin, nay a positive duty to offer heart and soul to the worship of the Guru, the state of things changed, for there were many women among his disciples in the monastery. Even as early as the third century B. C. the Buddhist monasteries developed the "Samavippya"—a doctrine which taught that men and women should join for a religious purpose. Those of the Bhikṣus and Bhikṣunis who followed this creed held private meetings setting at defiance the ridicule and contumely of the more conservative people of their sect.

But love between man and woman in the monasteries was not altogether as carnal as we sometimes find it in its degraded forms among the laity. Those who lived in a monastery were generally enlightened and inspired by the noble desire of renunciation in the cause of religion. Hence when some tender imotion first entered their hearts, the lovers did not at once fall

victims to their desire without a struggle. Examples of such struggles are to be met with in the extracts from various writers, that I have given above. These lovers who soared in the higher moral and religious plane, gradually idealised their love and in the case of Chandidas, it reached such a high watermark of spirituality that every form of carnality was eliminated from it. Love became the all-absorbing occupation and the motive power of his soul. It brought the passions of the flesh to a standstill, and opened windows and shutters in a mundane cottage, through which heaven's light was seen.

"The Sandhyā Bhāsā."

The language in which the poems of the Sahajiya-creed is couched has been called by the early Sahajiyas "Sandhyā-Bhāsā" or the language of the twilight, which means that no commentary has hitherto been able to throw full light on them, they are half-veiled and half-revealed. We outsiders reading these poems, find that the poet is attempting to scale an almost inaccessible height. Love idealised reaches the pinnacle-glory of fine emotions, but it gradually passes into the mystic plane, unknown to us, like Mount Everest or Kinchinjinga, passing out of view in the eternal snow that surrounds them. Chandidas worships man more than a god. He says, "Love a man or

Chandidas's idea of love.

love a woman, and the highest truths will be revealed to you." Here is an extract from one of his Sahajiya songs. "Oh man, oh my brother, listen to me. Man is true and man is real above all, and there is none in the universe greater than man." [1] The Guru in the language of the Sahajiya theology is another name of lover with spiritual pretensions. Chandidas says, "One who knows the secret of love, feels the pang within his heart, he lacks expression to convey it to others. He is his own saviour. Who is there that can boast of saving him ?" [2] In another place he says, "He first saves himself and then becomes the saviour of the world." Between the lover and the loved in the spiritual world, the intervention of a third party is not needed according to him. A man and a woman loving each other reach the highest stage of spiritual bliss. For them no other Guru is required. But this love that Chandidas sings of, is no ordinary emotion that we witness in men and women every day. It is a *sadhana* —a process to attain the state of beatitude. A great and mighty control over the flesh, over self, is indispensably needed to practise it. Rami

[1] চণ্ডীদাস কহে, শুন হে মানুষ ভাই,
সবার উপরে মানুষ সত্য তাহার উপরে নাই।

[2] যেবা জন জানে, কহিতে না পারে গুমরে গুমরে সেহ।
সে আপনার গুণে, তরিল আপনে, তাহারে তরাবে কেহ ?

to Chandidas was not only dear as a mistress or wife, but esteemed as parents, sacred as religion, and worshipped as all the goddesses of his temple. She was to him his universe. She was the light of his eyes, he counted the sacred beads to utter her name night and day. And he repeatedly assures us that his love for this woman was pure gold without any alloy in it, absolutely free from any touch of the passion of the flesh.[1] The poet moreover says, "He that pervades the universe unseen by mortals can only be known by one who is an adept in this mystic love."[2]

In the region of Chandidas's love, no divorce is recognised. He says, "There are many people of the nature of bees leaving the flower when it ceases to be sweet. It is not in the power of such a bee to taste of the heavenly

[1] তুমি রজকিনী, আমার ঘরণী
তুমি হও পিতৃমাতৃ।
ত্রিসন্ধ্যা যাজন, তোমার ভজন,
তুমি বেদমাতা গায়ত্রী।
রজকিনী রূপ, কিশোরী স্বরূপ,
কামগন্ধ নাহি তায়॥

[2] ব্রহ্মাণ্ড ব্যাপিয়া, আছয়ে যে জন,
কেহ না দেখয়ে তারে।
পীরিতির তত্ত্ব, যে জন জানয়ে,
সেই সে পাইতে পারে॥

nectar of true love."[1] "A person who has no constancy in love, cannot reach its spiritual height."[2] Whatever injustice and maltreatment you may receive at the hands of your lover, you must stick to the person. You are bound to love one for ever, whom you have once loved, for if it were not so, love would be reduced to a mere earthly transaction, where people work for wages. In the spiritual world love is a gift, an unconditional gift, no retraction of the holy gift is permissible. If for good, you get a return in evil and do not cease to love inspite of it, you will become a god. So Chandidas emphatically enjoins that under no circumstance a breach of love is allowable. If you have given it, you cannot retract it. The more you suffer, the more elevated you will be. If you cease to love, because you have got no return, you will not be in a position to reach its higher phase, it's *sādhana anga*.

[1] ভ্রমরী সমান, আছে কত জন,
মধু আশে করে প্রীত।
মধু ফুরাইলে, যায় উড়ি চলে,
এমতি তাদের রীত।
হেন ভ্রমরার, সাধ্য নহে কভু,
এ রস করিতে পান॥

[2] পীরিতি করিয়া ভাঙ্গয়ে যে।
সাধন অঙ্গ না পায় সে॥

Thus through his love for a woman Chandidas reaches his God. He says, "Do not think it is easy. Every youth loves a youthful woman. Words breathing high and romantic sentiments are now common-place." But to love with a devotion which is unswerving, to love by life-long suffering, to love inspite of all ills in return, in a word, the *sādhan* or the higher phase of love is not common. To conquer the flesh and yet love, to love with the soul and not merely with the flesh, is the secret of this love and Chandidas says, "All people are attracted by this Sahaja love. They do not know the secret, but attempt to practise it. It is like the mad attempts of a crow to reproduce by its crowing the great hymn of the god Shiva; it is like the glow-worms vying with the moonbeams, they sparkle by thousands and yet cannot be equal,—like an ape aspiring to secure the heavenly flower Parijat or like a ghost trying to imitate the dance of the great god Shiva by his jumps which only makes the angels laugh."[1]

[1] সহজ আচার, সহজ বিচার,
সহজ বলিব কায়।
না জানি মরম, করে আচরণ,
এ বড় বিষম দায়॥
না জানি ধরম, না জানি মরম,
আচরিতে করে আশ।
প্রণবের গান, শুনিয়া যেমন,
কাক করে অভিলাষ॥

"Those who follow the ordinary course of love," our poet says, "are like flies that are attracted by a light and are burnt to death." The whole world in like manner is burnt by the fire of passion. "This" Chandidas says, "is not the love professed by the Sahajiyas." "One," says the poet, "who wants to practise this love, should make his body lost to all senses like a log."[1] In the Hinayān much stress is laid upon this point; it urges on the Buddhists to reduce their bodies to 'dry logs,' *i.e.*, to make them completely passionless. Where love between man and woman is mutual, it is difficult to control the flesh. But it is the controlling of all desires which originate in flesh, that forms the secret of Sahajiya love as preached by Chandidas. It is difficult to do so. "One out of a million" says Chandidas, "can attain to this height."[2] Love for one who is not bound in wedlock, is the *parakiya rasa*. In mediaeval Europe, it was the prevailing fashion of the refined

সুধাকর দেখি, খদ্যোত যেমন,
সম তেজ হতে চাহে।
শত শত কোটি, করয়ে উদয়,
তবু তার যোগ্য নহে॥
পারিজাত পুষ্প, দেবের দুর্লভ,
কপিতে করয়ে আশ।
শিব নৃত্য দেখি, ভূতগণ নাচে,
দেবের সমাজে হাস॥

[1] শুষ্ক কাষ্ঠ সম আপনার দেহ করিতে হয়।

[2] কোটিকে গুটিক হয়।

classes to indulge in romantic love for one other than one's wife. In certain countries it was associated with spiritual ideas. Hallam seems to suggest that this romantic love had its origin in the East. The result of this was in many cases moral depravity of the worst type. In Bengal this romance originated with the Bikshus and the Bhikshunis, who are now commonly known by their nicknames, Neḍa-Neḍis. Chandidas was far from advocating this love. To attain spiritual bliss by loving one other than one's wife, was an adventure in the æsthetic world, upon which few could embark with a sense of security. "It is" says the poet, "like one attempting to bind a mountain with a thread, an elephant with a cobweb; it is like putting a frog into the mouth of a serpent and then getting it back unhurt from thence."[1] To control the desires, where there is mutual love and where there is an opportunity, is an almost impossible game, but Chandidas says, "One in a million may attain success, while the rest must walk in the path to hell."

Then comes the language of twilight, which we do not profess to understand. The adept

[1] সাপের মুখেতে, ভেকের নাচারি,
তবে ত রসিক রাজ।
যে জন চতুর, স্থমেরু শেখর,
স্থতায় গাথিতে পারে।
মাকসার জালে, মাতঙ্গ বাঁধিলে,
এ রস মিলয়ে তারে॥"

only knows it. The verses are mere hints to explain matters to those who already know a good deal of it. In order to be able to control the desires in course of such romantic love, one has to pass through a process of Yoga, and the hints which the poet gives after we have followed him for some time, refer to matters which are mysterious. "You are to inhale the breath after you have wholly emptied it." [1] says he, and then comes a description of the process, of which we know nothing. But from the loftiness of the doctrine of love that he professes, we cannot believe that the poet speaks jargon. He refers to the details in enigmatic writings in the language of twilight, which is explicable even to-day by the adepts, but they will never explain it to outsiders.

Chandidas broke to pieces all traditions of sexual morality and social prestige. He boldly announced that he adored the feet of a washer-woman. For a Brahmin of those orthodox days, to make such a declaration, required a courage, which only one who took his stand on the highest rock of purity and spiritual inspiration could show. To call one's consort a mother is opprobrious in Hindu society. But he says that the washer-

[1] যখন সাধন. করিবা তখন,
এড়ায় টানিবা শ্বাস।
তাহা হইলে, মন বায়ুসে,
আপনি হইবে রস॥ "

woman is both a father and a mother to him. In the highest plane of emotion, paternal affection and affection for the beloved have but one name. The distinction between Vatsalya (paternal affection), Sakhya (friendship), and Madhurya (nuptial love) disappear in the highest stage of emotional felicities. The whole soul awakes with the ardour of the mother and warmth of the wife, to love and adore the chosen one, when the hankerings of the flesh subside. Friendship, affection and love go by one name. It is like the rivers disappearing in the sea. Chandidas certainly reached this sea of tender emotions, when, contrary to usage, contrary to past tradition, contrary to the current ideas in the environment in which he lived, he, a true Brahmin, avowed that he adored a washer-woman and called her the sacred hymn of the Brahmans and the light of his eyes, nay father, mother and wife, thus creating a chaos in the established phraseology of the conventional Hindu homes. Not only did he reject all established paths in society, but a great scholar himself, he did not care for the metaphors which every poet of his time used. He used very common words and the simplest of language and this led many people to suppose that he was not a learned man. The discovery of his juvenile writings, the Krisna-Kirtan, has changed their belief. They are full of Sanskritic

Rejects the ordinary metaphors in use.

words and metaphors and display great erudition in Sanskrit by some Sanskrit *slokas* of his own composition interspersed among his Bengali songs. His cousin Nakul calls him a learned man in one of the songs. In spite of this learning he used the simplest and the most unassuming style in his later poems. He cared not for Sanskrit metaphors. He found fault with the poetic traditions known as *Kaviprasiddhi*. All Indian poets had delighted in using them in the past. They might be far from what is real, but these traditions are full of poetry and imaginativeness. "The Asoka flowers bloom when a handsome woman kicks them, the sound of the anklets of her feet awake the petals to a fresh life and they blossom." This is one example. So our poets have sung of women treading on the buds in order to make them bloom. Other traditions current in the country supply stock-phrases to the poets. When a flower blooms, the bee is sure to come to it, as the bee is believed traditionally to be the lover of flowers; when the moon rises, the bird Chatak is sure to rise high up in the sky to drink her beams, the moon and the bird Chatak are lovers. When the sun rises, the lotus is sure to open her beauty in the water. These poetical traditions became so current in the country, that in the writings of our poets one was sure to meet with stereotyped descriptions

containing these stock phrases of traditional rhetoric. So it is with a sense of relief that we find Chandidas rejecting some of these established traditions. He says, "You say that the sun loves the lotus, but I say it is not so. The lotus dies in the frost and the sun looks as bright as ever. You say that the flower loves the bee; not at all. If the bee does not go to the flower, the flower does not come to it. The *chataka* and the moon cannot be lovers, one is so low and the other so high."[1] Chandidas indicates that there cannot exist true love between the great and the small, love like death is all-leveller, it must bring down the two to the same level as it did in his case when he, a Brahmin, adored a washer-woman. Love cannot exist where one is happy and the other miserable, nor can it reach its full development when one is

[1] ভানু কমলে বলি সেও
হেন নহে।
হিমে কমল মরে ভানু
সুখে রহে॥
কুসুম মধুপে কহি সেহ
নহে তুল।
না আসিলে ভ্রমর
আপনি না যায় ফুল॥
কি ছার চকোর চাঁদ
দুহুঁ সম নহে।
ত্রিভুবনে হেন নাহি
চণ্ডীদাস কহে॥

constrained by social and other barriers to remain in one's own place and is afraid to run into the embrace of the beloved when the latter does not come. Thus do we see how Chandidas, by his own clear and inspired insight, saw into the very nature of things and did not care for established custom, tradition or what other poets had previously said in their books.

There is one song of Chandidas, which written in the 'language of twilight,' gives a dim idea of the poet's conception of love. It was praised in enthusiastic language by Sir Rabindranath in the monthly journal 'Bharati' many years ago. But the import of the song is not clear. It will certainly remind one of Byron's celebrated lines in the Childe Harold, Canto III beginning with "It is by creating etc." The song seems to imply that the mind when it seeks its own ideal to worship and love, and does not find such in the world, sinks into the depths of despair. With the whole warmth of the soul and with all the romance of imagination, we vainly seek for love in the world; the ideal after all proves to be a mere phantom, the creation of our own minds, or our superior self personated in our dreams. When baffled in our attempts to find out such a person, we become as though dead, the call of sympathy is then perchance heard,—some one approaches to take the burden of our woes and we

find our ideal fulfilled in the call of our sympathiser."[1]

The poem appears to suggest that beauty, moral virtues and other qualities of the highest type, which attract our imagination, do not constitute the chief elements of true love. These qualities are rare, yet one who wants to love should not despair if he fails to find his expectations fulfilled. The person who takes the burden of your woes and is your sympathiser, will fulfil all your conditions. The heart will draw the kindred heart to itself. The momentary charm of glittering qualities do not guarantee permanent love. All of us want to love the man, who

[1] প্রেমের আকৃতি, দেখিয়া মূরতি,
মন যদি তাতে ধায়।
তবে ত সে জন, রসিক কেমন,
বুঝিতে বিষম দায়॥
আপন মাধুরী, দেখিতে না পারি,
সদাই আগুন জ্বলে।
আপনা আপনি, করয়ে ভাবনি,
কি হৈল কি হৈল বলে॥
মানুষ অভাবে, মন মুরছিয়া,
তরাসে আছাড় খায়।
আছাড় খাইয়া, করে ছট্‌ফট্‌,
জীয়ন্তে মরিয়া যায়॥
তাহার মরণ, জানে কোন জন,
কেমন মরণ সেই।
যে জন জানয়ে, সেই সে জীয়য়ে,
মরণ বাঁটিয়া লেই॥
বাঁটিলে মরণ, জীয়ে দুই জন,
লোকে তাহা নাহি জানে।
প্রেমের আকৃতি, করে ছটফট,
চণ্ডীদাস ইহা ভানে॥

promised to take the burden of our sorrows and sins and died for the sake of others.

We need not dwell upon the merits of Chandidas's Radha-Krisna love-songs at length. Beams found nothing striking in his poetry and attributed the high place given him by the Vaishnavas to a mere traditional reputation and to the fact that Chaitanya sang his songs. The opinion of a foreign scholar, whose knowledge of Bengali was but superficial, need not have much weight with us. It requires time for a great poet to be understood even by his own people. For these five hundred years his songs have been sung in the country and he has received offerings of adulatory verses from some of the greatest poets that have succeeded him. After the lapse of five centuries that reputation is not on the wane, but even on the ascending scale. Among his admirers, Sir Rabindranath has tried in several articles to bring out the hidden depth of the poet's meaning. Though occasionally his language breathes sensuality, an element which we find in all emotional poetry of the past from the time of Solomon to Byron, still Chandidas's poems soar in a higher plane than that of his contemporaries. As an illustration we ask our readers to place side by side the poems of Chandidas with those of Vidyapaty, the great contemporary

Vidyapaty and Chandidas contrasted.

poet. If we take, for instance, the picture of Radha in maidenly love with Krisna, depicted by each of the two poets who begin their poems with such an account, we shall see the contrast in a striking manner. The Radha of Vidyapaty has just stepped into youth, her girlish manners are not all gone. The poet says that she sometimes breaks into an unmeaning laughter like a child, at others a sweet smile is noticed on her lips, shewing the advent of bashful youth. At times her steps are light and playful like those of a girl and at others they are slow and cautious like those of a youthful maiden. She sees her own rising charms and looks surprised at them when alone. When others talk of love, her ears are there greedily following each word, but if any body refers to her doing so, she suppresses her smile with her tears and shows false anger. When she is in her toilet-room, she privately enquires of her maids, "what is love?"[1]

[1] "খনে খনে দশনে ছটাছট হাস।
খনে খনে খনে অধর আগে করুবাস॥
চমকি চলয়ে খন খন চলু মন্দ।
মনমথ পাঠ পহিল অনুবন্ধ॥
নিরজনে উরজ হেরত কত বেরি।
হাসত আপন পয়োধর হেরি॥
কেলি রভস কথা যত শুনে।
আনত হেরি ততহি দেহি কানে॥
তাহে যদি কেহ করএ পরচারি।
কাঁদন মাখি হাসি দেয় গারি॥"

This sensual picture may be contrasted with the one drawn by Chandidas when love has dawned on Radha's soul. The dark blue colour of Krisna is an infatuation to her senses. In the dark blue clouds she finds the tender colour of Krisna, and gazes at them thirstily. She abstains from food and wears the ochre-coloured cloth of a female ascetic. She tears away the garland of flowers from her braids in order to see their dishevelled beauty. In her dark hair she finds a colour to remind her of her Krisna.[1] The cloud specially fascinates her eyes, in its enchantingly dark blue, she sees the illusion of Krishna; and her eyes move not from the sight till she falls into a trance, and with hands raised up speaks mystically to the clouds. She

[1] রাধার কি হৈল অন্তর ব্যথা।
সে যে বসিয়া বিরলে থাকএ একলে
না শুনে কাহার কথা।
বিরতি আহারে রাঙ্গা বাস পরে
যেমন যোগিণী পারা।
সদাই ধেয়ানে চাহে মেঘপানে
না চলে নয়নের তারা।
এলাইয়া বেণী ফুলের গাথুঁনি
দেখয়ে খসাইএ চূলি।
হসিত বয়ানে চাহে মেঘপানে
কি কহে দুহাত তুলি।
এক দিঠি করি ময়ূর ময়ূরী
কণ্ঠ করে নিরীক্ষণে।
চণ্ডীদাস কহে নব পরিচয়
কালিয়া বধূর দলে।

becomes an embodiment of the Krisna-idea, every thing in the universe has suggestions to remind her of Krishna, till the dark water of the Jumna and the colour of collyrium throw her into a trance. This idealistic poetry written nearly a century before Chaitanya, seems to be a prelude to the life of the Master. For Chandidas's poetry and Chaitanya's life are bound together वागार्थाविव सम्पृक्तौ, like letter and its import. What the poet wrote, the great lover illustrated in his life.

We shall conclude our brief review of Chandidas's poems by alluding to a song in which he gives his conception of spiritual love.

Radha says she will have nothing to do with those who pose as religious teachers but have no feelings for others. She says that the outer doors of her soul, her external senses, are closed. She sees Krisna within her, but the mystic vision rests in such a subtle region that if there is the least worldliness, the vision fades, that the truths of that world, which are presented by the vision, will appear strange and even painful to the people of this world. She then describes how love for Krisna is to be developed. Night and day, sleeping and awake, one must think of Krisna, but this should be like the secret treasure of the soul not to be divulged to others. One should work, unattached to the world, doing one's duty like a machine, with the heart fixed

on Krisna. You will, she says, dip into water, but come out without being drenched. Earthly pleasure and pain should be alike to you, you must be indifferent to both. Do not pose as a chaste or religious person. But within be chaste and good. Do not show yourself wonderful in any way, do as other men do outwardly and the secret of love, says Chandidas, will be revealed to you.[1]

Chandidas's songs (848 in number) have been lately published by the Sahitya-Parishat of

[1] মরম না জানে ধরম বাখানে
এমন আছয়ে যারা।
কাজ নাই সখি তাদের কথায়
বাহিরে রহুন তারা ॥
আমার বাহির দুয়ারে কপাট লেগেছে
ভিতর দুয়ার খোলা।
তোরা নিসাড়া হইয়ে আয়লো সজনী
আঁধার পেরিলে আলা ॥
আলোর ভিতরে কালাটি আছে
চঁওকি রয়েছে সেথা।
সে দেশের কথা এ দেশে কহিলে
বাজিবে মরমে ব্যথা ॥
তোরা পর পতি সনে শয়নে স্বপনে
সদাই করিবি লেহা।
নীর না ছুঁইবি সিনান করিবি
ভাবিনী ভাবের দেহা ॥
তোরা না হইবি সতী না হবি অসতী
থাকিবি লোকের মাঝে।
চণ্ডীদাস কহে এমত হইলে
তবে ত পীরিতি সাজে ॥

Calcutta. This is the latest and the best edition that has yet appeared. It does not however include the poet's Krisna-Kirtan, which will be published by the Sahitya-Parishat separately very soon.[1] The Krisna-Kirtan is more or less an imitation of the Bhagavata and of Jaydeva's Gita Govinda. Chandidas's edition referred to above has been edited by Babu Nilratan Mukherjee, B.A., and owes a considerable number of new songs embodied in it to an old manuscript of Chandidas's poems, which is now in the possession of an employee in the estate of the Zeminders of Kirnahar in the district of Birbhum. Curiously Babu Nilratan Mukherjee, while giving us other details, has not informed us of the name of the owner of the precious manuscript evidently with the object of protecting him from the greed of scholars engaged in research work in the field of Bengali Literature. There are altogether 605 songs in the manuscript, of which 500 are declared to be new. It would be, however, wise if the owner were to sell or make a gift of the manuscript to the Calcutta University or the Sahitya-Parishat. Otherwise the copy will be doomed to inevitable destruction. For however great care he may take of it now, there will be little chance of the manuscript

[1] Since the above was written, the Krishna-Kirtan has been published by the Sahitya-Parisat of Calcutta.

being preserved in the next generation when he will be no more.

The ovations.

The first recorded ovation that Chandidas got from the scholars of his country, was offered by Narahari Sarkar of Srikhanda in the district of Burdwan.[1] He was older than Chaitanya by nearly half a century, so that though not a contemporary of Chandidas, he was born not long after his death. Narahari refers to the great pathos of the poet's career, probably hinting at the persecution he suffered for his love and his tragic death. He moreover speaks of the mystic import of his love, which people were likely to misunderstand. Narahari says that Chandidas was not only a great scholar, but a singer of uncommon powers, that in the village of Nannur the goddess Vasuli sanctioned his love for the washerwoman, which became a source of constant inspiration to the poet. The writer concludes his eulogistic poetry on Chandidas by saying, " Those who can appreciate and admire Chandidas's poems are alone capable of knowing

"যাহার চরিতে ঝুরে পশু পাখী পীরিতে মজিল যে।
শ্রীরাধাগোবিন্দ কেলি-বিলাস যে বর্ণিল বিবিধ মতে॥
কবিবর চারু নিরুপম মহী ব্যাপিল যাহার গীতে।
শ্রীনন্দনন্দন নবদ্বীপ পতি শ্রীগৌর আনন্দ হইয়া॥
যার গীতামৃত আস্বাদিল স্বরূপ রামানন্দ লৈয়া।
পরম পণ্ডিত সঙ্গীতে গন্ধর্ব্ব জিনিয়া যাহার গানে॥
'চণ্ডীদাস পদে যার মতি সেই পীরিতি মরম জানে'।
সুখময়ী তারা ধুবুনী পরশে ফুরিবে বিবিধ মতো॥"

the secret of love." Narahari speaks of Rami, the washerwoman, as Tara. We have however an explanation for this in the statement of a later poet who calls Rami by the name of Ram Tara. So her name is both Rami and Tara.

From the poem of Narahari, referred to, we find that Chandidas's poems were already very popular throughout Bengal during Narahari's time, which was less than a century from the time the poet flourished.

The next admirer of Chandidas, recording his praises in a poem, is Prasad Dās (1496-1533), a contemporary of Chaitanya. "When we read his poems, the heart melts,"—he writes and refers to the order of Vasuli, which served as an inspiration to the poet. We have in the next century (the 17th) the great poet Govinda Das, writing adulatory verses on Chandidas. Govinda calls Chandidas "rich in the wealth of love" and the "jewel in the crown of those who are adepts in tender emotions."[1] In the 17th century an anonymous writer wrote three couplets in Sanskrit in which he mentioned seven poets as the greatest of the country. Of these Vidyapaty, Chandidas and Jaydeva are denominated as "Princes of poets."[2] Another anonymous writer says that one might call

[1] রসিক মুকুটমণি প্রেমে ধনে হি ধনি ॥

[2] বিদ্যাপতিশ্চণ্ডিদাসো জয়দেবঃ কবিশ্বরঃ ।

Chandidas a devotee of devotees, a lover of lovers and a poet of poets.[1] In the earlier part of the 18th century the illustrious compiler and annotator of the Padamrita Samudra, wrote verses in praise of Chandidas. "Chandidas" he says, "was a fountain of tender emotions unmatched in the whole world." "Vidyapaty" he says, "is the greatest diadem of the crown of the princes of poets." The praises are significant. Vidyapaty has exhausted the stock of all that constitutes the true essence of lyric poetry according to the canons of Rhetoric. The attributes of a *nāyikā* or chief female character in love are illustrated with a skill and beauty that really entitle him to be ranked with the foremost poets of the age. But Chandidas cared not for the canons of poetry laid down in the Sastras, which Mr. Jacobi calls "poetics" and the Sanskrit scholars know as 'the Alankara Shastra,' his poetry welled from within him and in giving expression to the emotions that overflowed his heart, he owed his facility to no rhetorician, but was himself his own guide. It is for this that Rādhāmohan Thakur calls him not the poet of poets of the rank of Vidyapaty, who trod the path of established poetry, but as a master, a fountain-head

[1] কবিকুলে কা বচণ্ডীদাস কবি ভাবুকে ভাবুক মানি।
রসিকে রসিক প্রেমিকে প্রেমিক সাধকে সাধক গণি।

of the emotions and, inspite of his eccentric course, unmatched in the world. After Rādhāmohan Thakur, Gokulnandan Sen, popularly known as Vausnava Das, the famous compiler of the Padakalpataru, offered his ovation to Chandidas and Vidyapaty in the preliminary verses of his celebrated compilation.

So we see from the period shortly after his death,—from Narahari Sarkar down to Sir Rabindranath,—Chandidas has all through received the greatest respect from his countrymen. We find him imitated by a host of writers of whom Jnan Das and Balaram Das of the 17th century are the most prominent. Govinda Das tried to imitate the style of Vidyapaty, as Jnan Das that of Chandidas. In other countries the greatest poets are appreciated by scholars and literary men, and the mass has hardly any chance of realising the beauties of their works. But in India the case is quite different. The poems of the greatest Indian poets, to use the expression of a distinguished literary man of the present age, are not one-man-deep but a thousand-men-deep. We find Chandidas's songs on the lips of street beggars, women and children alike. When the high poetical import of these songs requires elucidation in order to be appreciated by the illiterate, the professional singers interpret them in the simplest way, by adding a few lines which are also sung along with them,

that bring out the hidden meaning of the poems. This process is very common and is, as you all know, called আখর দেওয়া. In Chaitanya's time Gopal Das, whose title was Akharia, excelled in this, and since then it has grown to be a very common practice with the Kritan-singers.

There is another point about Chandidas, on which stress has been laid by some scholars. There are some lines in Chandidas, which seem to prognosticate the coming advent of Chaitanya. When describing Radha as learning to play upon Sri Krisna's flute, Chandidas makes her wear Krisna's apparels, and for all intents and purposes she is made to look like Krisna. The indelible difference, however, is that of colour, Sri Krisna being dark and Radha fair. In concluding the song describing the curious situation, Chandidas asks in the colophon, "In what country will there be such a thing?" Now it is believed by the Vaisnavas that Chaitanya was an incarnation of Krisna, but his exterior, owing to an old promise, was that of Radha, brightly fair. The last line referred to in the song is held to be mystical, hinting at the fact that Chaitanya would be born in Bengal as Krisna's incarnation with the exterior of Radha, which is fair.

The prophecy.

Another line, which also suggests a similar prophecy, is that in which Chandidas describing

Sri Krisna, says in the colophon that gazing at the figure of Krisna, the eyes are so charmed that one cannot ascertain whether his colour is dark or fair. Now Krisna's dark colour is unmistakeable, nowhere in the sacred writings of the Hindus, he is described as fair. Then why should this mistake arise at all? The Vaisnavas believe that this again is a distinct reference by the poet who passed away at least a century before Chaitanya, to the coming incarnation of Krisna, in which he was to have a fair colour.

Chandidas's poems are not only the most exquisitely sweet of Vaisnava songs, not only do they give a clearer elucidation of spiritual love and its philosophy than the works of other Vaisnava poets, not only are they mystical and fully suggestive of the spiritual love that underlies the human, but they are held sacred by the Vaisnavas, because of their being constantly sung by Chaitanya, this being undoubtedly the highest recognition of which even the greatest man of India of any age could be proud according to Vaisnava notions.

Before I conclude I take the liberty to allude to another tradition about Chandidas and Vidyapaty. This was related to me by Babu Radha Raman Ghosh, late Prime Minister of the Tippera Raj, and a great authority on Vaisnava literature. The Radha-Krisna songs of Vidyapaty are sensual to the extreme, inspite of their

inimitable poetic grace and beauty, so far as the stage before the last, the Bhava Sammilan or the union in spirit, is concerned. In the Bhava Sammilan, however, the language suddenly throws off its sensuous garb in Vidyapaty's writings, and becomes highly spiritual. In the last chapter, the songs are extremely mystical and approach, nay match the subtle spiritual beauty of Chandidas's songs. The tradition referred to says that a great change came over the spirit of Vidyapaty's poetry after his interview with Chandidas, who interpreted love from a higher plain making a great impression on the poet of Mithila.

Chandidas's influence on Vidyapati.

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Supplementary note on Chandidas.

The above was written in the year 1915, and since that time further illuminating facts have been discovered which have materially added to our knowledge of Chandidas's life The most important of these later findings are two pages of a Bengali MS., about 250 years old, which were discovered a few years ago by Babu Basantaranjan Ray from heaps of old Bengali MSS. belonging to the Sahitya Parishat of Calcutta. I have quoted the full texts of these two pages in my latest edition of "Banga-Bhasa O-Sahitya."

The contents of the two pages substantially confirm the facts of the tradition about Chandidas's death to which I referred in the body of these lectures, though, however, there is a slight discrepancy in the details of the two accounts. The pages under review are supposed to be composed by Rami herself. We find her name in the colophon, and as we have got some other specimens of her composition, already incorporated in my Typical Selections from Old Bengali Literature, showing the same familiar style, her authorship of this account of Chandidas's death may be accepted as an undisputed fact.

In this poem Rami mentions the fact of Chandidas's great renown as a poet and singer. We have confirmation of the latter quality of Chandidas in the account given by the great lyric poet Narahari, who calls Chandidas to be a Gandharva in music (সঙ্গীতে গন্ধর্ব্ব). Then Rami proceeds to describe how the attention of the Emperor of Gour was drawn by the poet's fame and how His Majesty invited him to give a musical performance in the palace. The whole people of Gour assembled to hear his songs. So charming were his songs that the audience became spell-bound and full of admiration for the poet of Nannur. But none appreciated the poet's power so warmly as did the Begum of the Emperor. Who this Emperor of Gour was, Rami does not tell us. In reply to a query of mine on the point, Mr. Stapleton discussed the history of the Gour Emperors of this period and came to the conclusion that it was probably Jelaluddin (1417-1431 A.D.) who slew Chandidas.[1] It is not

1 "As regards your queries as to who could have been the Badshâ of Gour, who caused Chandidas to be slain, it is necessary to exercise great caution in taking Stewart for authority in Mediaeval Bengali history, as the works of Blochman and recent numismatists have led to the chronology being completely revised. The real name of Shamsuddin was Sāhābuddin Dāyazid Shah and the only coins of his known (with one exception) are dated 816 and 817 A. H. (1413-1414 A. D.). The exception is dated 812 A. H., and this, together with other facts, suggests that probably with the connivance of Raja Ganesha of Bhaturia, he made an attempt, four years earlier, when Ghiyasuddin Azam was on the throne, to seize the kingdom of Bengal, but was

unlikely that the Begum Sahibā might have originally been a Hindu, which would better account for the fact that she appreciated the Radha-Krisna songs so greatly. In those days beautiful Hindu ladies of high caste were often seized by Mahomedan Emperors and brought to their harems. In some instances, Hindu princes made treaties with Mahomedan potentates by offering them the hands of their fair daughters, and the case of Jodha Bai was no solitary instance of such alliances. In greater number of cases, however, the Mahomedan chiefs forcibly took possession of beautiful Hindu damsels, as Isa Khan Masnadali of Jangal Bari did in Sripur. I say that it is simply a conjecture of mine that the Nawab Sahebā might have been a convert to Islam. The assumption that a

unsuccessful. When three or four years later, he resumed hostilities against Ghiyasuddin's son, Saifuddin, the latter was probably slain, and not only did Sāhābuddin came to the throne, but was also succeeded by a son Alauddin in 817 A. H. Raja Ganesh seems to have ejected the latter in favour of his son Jadu, who had been converted to Muhammadanism after the invasion of Bengal by Sultan Ibrahim of Jaunpur and placed on the throne under the name of Jelaluddin in 818 A. H. But after Ibrahim had withdrawn and Ganesh had failed to reconvert Jelaluddin to Hinduism, Ganesh probably seized the throne under the name of Danuja-mardan. He and another Hindu, called Mahendra, retained the throne for two years (Saka 1339 and 1340= 1417-1418 A. D.); but Jelaluddin then regained power and probably continued to rule Bengal till at least 835 A. H. (1431 A. D.). He was strongly anti-Hindu and I agree with Nalini Babu that it was probably he who also slew Chandidas, and not Sāhābuddin."

Letter, Dated Dacca, the 14th September, 1920.

Moghul or Pathan woman would feel such warm love for the Hindu songs is rather bold and hard to believe. If Jelaluddin was the monarch whose name is stained with the poet's blood, it is all the more probable that his Begum was a Hindu princess as the Emperor was originally a Hindu. We are not, however, certain on this point

Let us now revert to our main topics. Rami next proceeds to state how the Emperor came to know of the great admiration of the Begum for Chandidas. She was called before her lord to explain her conduct. A woman of chaste character and full of straightforwardness, she did not conceal anything from her lord. She said that the songs of Chandidas had really charmed her; it was no human being, she said, who could compose such poems and sing so sweetly. She was sincere and open-hearted and saw no fault in admiring a poet. But her husband took the matter in another light. He passed an order that Chandidas should be bound to the back of an elephant with strong cords and mercilessly whipped to death in the presence of the people of his city. The Queen interceded saying, "You do not know, my lord, what you are going to do." But the infuriated tyrant must have his way.

The order was executed. Bleeding profusely under the merciless stripes, the greatest lyrical poet of Bengal, expired slowly under the severe

lashes of the executioner. But says Rami, "When he was dying in this cruel manner, his eyes were fixed on me to the last."

But here this tragedy does not end. The Queen, who was ordered to witness Chandidas's death, was shocked as every woman would be under the circumstances. But her sentiments were raised to the highest pitch, as a feeling of remorse rent her heart that the fact of having declared her admiration before the Nawab was the cause of Chandidas's death—that her indiscretion caused this cruel tragedy. She swooned away, as she saw Chandidas dying. Alas, she never arose from that swoon but quietly passed away!

Rami says in the last line that full of horror at the sight and admiring love for the Begum Sahebā, she ran to the spot where she lay dead, cold as ice, and prostrated herself at her feet.

Here ends the account given by Rami. The tradition to which we have already referred is almost the same having only minor points of difference with the account given by Rami.

We believe the account given by Rami to be true, as it is a contemporary piece of evidence by one who knew the particulars better than anybody, of the facts relating to Chandidas, and the record itself is about 250 years old. The tradition that has since come down to the masses

must have been slightly altered in some points during the centuries that have intervened.

The Emperor of Gour has been spoken of in the tradition as a Nawab of the locality, and Chandidas's death is said to have occurred in the temple cannonaded by the Nawab. Now it is quite possible that the infuriated Nawab passed a simultaneous order to destroy the temple of Basuli at Nannur, a point which Rami omitted to mention. So the tradition on this point, except the point of Chandidas's death within the temple, may also be accepted as historically true. It may be a fact that some relics of Chandidas's body might have been brought to Kirnahar and buried where his tomb stands to the present day.

Another important point in regard to Chandidas's career has been discovered in an old Bengali MS., which we found out in the heaps of old MSS., presented to the Calcutta University Library by Babu Sanat Kumar Mukherjee. The name of the poet is Tarani Raman and he gives us an account of the Sahajiya cult, as inculcated by Chandidas. The poem says that a Raja in the proximity of Nannur was greatly attached to Chandidas and regretted very much that the poet should have given up his caste for the sake of a low-born woman. He called on Chandidas and asked him to abandon his vicious love and come back to caste; if any help from him would be necessary to bring about

a compromise between the poet and his community, the Raja said that he would be most glad to offer it in behalf of one whom he admired as a poet and scholar and loved as a friend.

Chandidas advised his friend, the Raja, to interview Rami and hear from her mouth particulars about the Sahajiya cult which both of them had adopted. If the Raja could convince her that she and her lover were wrong, he would instantly give up his present career and be once more a man of society as he formerly was.

The Raja called on Rami accordingly and was so greatly impressed by the account given by her of the lofty Order to which she belonged that instead of converting them, he himself became a Sahajiya convert.

I will briefly refer to some points explained by Rami, who said that the Sahajiya was the highest form of human love, that could be conceived, which, at a later stage, transformed itself to love divine. She gave details as to how one should proceed in the path of this spiritual elevation.

1. Lovers should select each other in the first instance.

2. They should then separate themselves from one another and live under temptations at different places. For closely living together at the outset, they might be overpowered by each other's personality ; and in that case it would be

difficult to test if the love between the two was genuine and absolutely free from other ingredients, or partly a result of compulsion or living together outside all other influences.

3. If living at a distance from one another in the midst of temptations, they should still feel the same warmth of love undecayed and holy as ever, they should then come to live in the same house. After passing through some other tests, the lover should wake up the whole night, laying his hands on the feet of the object of his love. But the hands will be only on the feet. Learning thus how to restrain oneself for six months, one should proceed on in this manner to the next stage, so that he or she will, in an advanced stage, feel that the body is merely like a dry log and wholly subservient to the spirit.

In one of the poems of Chandidas, as I have already stated, he says that body must be turned into a dry log; it must be free from all animation of passion.

What is, then, the secret of this love? It is an absolute conquest of the flesh. A Sahajiyâ woman told me, "You worship a clay idol, or a stone-image; such a God is easy to please. You offer your gods some flowers and *ghee* and think that he is pleased. But Sahajiyâ-love is not like that." Says Chandidas, "Hear me, brother man,—a man is above all in the creation. There is none higher than man." You are to please a

living being and that is the hardest thing in the world. To-day you worship a man and think that he is a god. Let six months pass, and you will find him, if not a devil, not a god either. Sahajiyâ-love teaches you to stick to your lover. Even if the person beats you, you will feel pain for the hurt he receives in his hands in beating you, delighting in your own pain, as a gift from him. Says Chandidas, "I do not know any good except what pleases you."

I have already alluded to the fact that Chandidas does not recognise divorce in love. He, who divorces his love, whatever the cause may be, is not privileged to taste the spiritual joy of this love. It is not a thing for men of society. It is a message from heaven. Divorce is necessary for the social man and social woman. But if your heart is to be initiated into the highest spiritual joy of love, you are to go through the thorny path of unreturned and trampled feelings—through all that bruises and cuts your heart,—and gradually feel love's blessedness which is reached by the complete conquest of flesh and extinction of personal desire. This is indicated by the line of Chandidas,

"পীরিত করিয়া ভাঙ্গয়ে যে
সাধন অঙ্গ না জানে সে।"

Many sects tried to attain the end pursued by the "Samavippyaists" mentioned before, as the

creed was apparently attractive owing to matters relating to the sexes alluring men and women at the outset, but their attempts were mostly failures, and the sect did more harm than good to society, leading many couples to unhappy and tragic ends in the long run. But still it was a spiritual system for the attainment of higher joys by means of emotional culture, and Chandidasa, though appreciating the value of the truth underlying this process more than anybody, still gave his warning to young men of his age by saying as already referred to "You all want to be a Sahajiya, but one in a million can attain its goal."

Chaitanya saw that what meant ruin to a million, less one, should not be tolerated as a spiritual system. Chandidas gave a mere warning, but Chaitanya absolutely prohibited such sexual romance. He said, "They are all mad after love. Who knows what love is? Is it love to offer services to women? When you will forget all difference between the sexes and look upon men and women in the same light, then only can you know the true import of love."

He turned hard upon those who had the least desire for women, amongst the ascetics of his own Order. All this is well-known to you.

Vaishnava lyrical songs are not stray love-poems. They are the expressions of men who have looked upon love from the highest point of

spiritual felicities. If one studies the whole literature of the Padas, one will see that underlying it, lies the Sahajiya element of sacrificing love and spirit of renunciation with a spiritual end. The garb is sometimes sensuous; that is only to save the spirit of the songs from being inaccessibly abstract. But unless one has a knowledge of the *parakiyā sādhan* and its highest felicitous end, one will not be able to do justice to this literature. It is the product of a special culture for centuries and the result of a spiritual system practised by saintly men for long ages. The Nava-Rasiks or the nine initiated souls of this path, *viz.*, Abhiram Swami with his lady-love, Malini, Jaydeva with Padmāvati, Chandidas with Rami, Billa Mangal Thakur with Chintāmani, and others took the vow of an expedition to conquer flesh in this path, and made their ascent to the steep height of their spiritual ambition by united purpose সমভিপ্রায় as the Buddhist sect called it. The lives of these saints may be misinterpreted by the social man, but all the purity, all the renunciation and all the sufferings which ever characterised the careers of spiritual martyrs are theirs; and the Padas are a reflection of this great romance and felicity with all their concomitant sufferings, experienced by the Saints of the Sahajiyā-Order.

CHAITANYA'S DESERTION OF NADIA.

One of the most fascinating sources of biographical information about Chaitanya, one which has not yet been explored, is the wealth of songs composed by some of the old Vaisnava poets, who were mostly his contemporaries. We have hitherto depended upon the Chaitanya Bhāgvata by Vrindavan, Karchas by Murari Gupta and Govinda Das, Chaitanya Chandrodaya and Chaitanya Charit by Kavi Karnapur, Chaitanya Mangal by Jayananda and Lochan Das and, last though not least, the Chaitanya Charitamrita by the venerable Krisnadas Kaviraj of Jhamatpur (Burdwan), for the materials of his life. But up to now the songs of Vaisnava poets which give almost a connected and minute story of the Master's life, have been left in the background. The songs are full of poetic images and characterised by a play of imagination, which it may be argued, cannot be accepted as giving a true statement of historical facts. But such an apprehension will be removed by a perusal of the songs before dismissing them on the ground that they are written by poets and not by historians. Reading them carefully in the light of history, one will be struck with the faithful account they often

The historical value of the songs.

give of the life of the Master, and if they are not altogether free from exaggerations and poetic flights, the same complaint can be put forth against many standard biographies of those times. I shall here give an account of Chaitanya's *Sanayas*, as found in these songs, some of which combine the charm of poetic fancy with the vividness of a historian's sketch.

In spite of the indifference with which these songs have been treated by modern historians, they have been all along very popular among the lay Vaisnavas. The literate classes among this sect may ignore the value of the songs, and prefer the standard biographies of the Master, in which Sanskrit texts and authorities have been quoted and great learning displayed to prove Chaitanya as an incarnation of the Deity. But the songs without any show of learning, though the poets who composed them were great scholars, appeal straight to the people's heart by the unassuming simplicity of their descriptions; and the Kirtaniyas have, through the medium of the fascinating language of the early poets, communicated every minute detail of Chaitanya's life to the people for more than four centuries.

The whole life of Chaitanya may be told anew in the light of these delightful songs, but I shall here, as I have already stated, relate the

story of Chaitanya's desertion of Nadia, mainly based on these new materials.

The first one of these song's.

The first of these songs was written by Govinda Ghosh. He was one of the companions of Chaitanya and a native of Agradvipa. The story is well known how Chaitanya dissuaded him from turning a Sannyasi. He had already joined the Holy Order. One day he produced a bit of Haritaki fruit before the Master after he had taken his meals, and when Chaitanya asked him as to where he got it, he said it was a remnant of the fruit taken the day before. Whereupon the Master looked grave and said, "Dear Govinda, you store things for the morrow, which as a Sannyasi, you should not, depending entirely on the Lord. You have yet a little worldliness in you and you should return to your house-hold life." Govinda Ghosh was compelled to give up his place in the Holy Order and return home. Govinda Ghosh and Vasudeva Ghosh were two brothers. They were poets and musicians, and it is said that they sang songs in such an exquisitely sweet voice that Chaitanya often became lost in emotional felicities and danced for joy when the brothers sang.[1]

[1] বাস্থদেব গোবিন্দ মুকুন্দ তিন ভাই।
যাদের কীর্ত্তনে নাচে চৈতন্য গোসাঞি ॥

The first song relating to Chaitanyas' *Sannyas*, we find, as I have already stated, written by Govinda Ghosh. According to this song, it was first reported by Gadadhar, who was perhaps Chaitanya's dearest friend, to Mukunda that the Master had resolved to renounce the world as an ascetic. Gadadhar Das's speech faltered and his voice was choked with tears. He said, "We paid a visit to Chaitanya. We found him sitting with his head bent down, a tear rolled down his cheek. He looked pale, we asked him the reason, but he did not say any thing for sometime. Then he told us of his intention. Gadadhar after delivering this, became like one paralysed and Mukunda's heart seemed to break as he looked at the pale face of his friend." This is the first song relating to Chaitanya's *Sannyas*. We find a substantiation of this account in the Kaḍcha of Govinda Das, the blacksmith who also was a contemporary and companion of Chaitanya. The Kaḍcha says that it was Gadadhar who first told of Chaitanya's resolve to Mukunda.

The Vaiṣṇava Vandanā.

Chaitanya was twenty-two years of age at this time. His spiritual ecstacies had already drawn round him a large multitude who believed him to be a god. He had a young beautiful wife at home, who adored him. His mother Sachi, who had already sustained severe bereavements, doted

upon him as her only refuge. He was now going to give up all family-ties, to leave his home once for all and turn a Sannyasi in the very dawn of youth.

The second song by the same writer, Govinda Ghosh, describes Chaitanya's condition vividly. Chaitanya saw the grief of his friend, Mukunda, and soothed him by sweet words. He said,[1] "Long have I thought, how I can remove the sorrows of the world. 'How can I do it?' has been the question that has again and again struck me. The healing balm is in the love of God, but this advice they would not accept from me as I am a householder. Even my own pupils in the *tol* think that my head has gone wrong. When I begin to preach God's love to them with ardour, they seem to

[1] ইহাত না জানি মোরা সকালে মিলিনু গোরা
অবনত মাথে আছে বসি।
নিঝোরে নয়ন ঝুরে বুক বাহি ধারা পড়ে
মলিন হয়েছে মুখ শশী।
পণ্ডিত পড়ুয়া যারা আমারে না মানে তারা
মোর উপদেশ নাহি লয়।

. . . . .

অনেক চিন্তার পর দড়ায়িনু এ অন্তর
আমি ত্বরা ছাড়ি গৃহ বাস।
মস্তক মুণ্ডন করি এ ডোর কৌপিন পরি
অবিলম্বে লইব সন্ন্যাস ॥
শ্রীগোবিন্দ ঘোষে কয় এ তব উচিত নয়
সাঙ্গ করা নদীয়ার লীলা।

doubt my sanity. The world will not accept the name of God from me, unless I show renunciation by my own life. Shortly shall I take the beggar's bowl and the ochre-coloured cloth of a Sannyasi. My curly hair shall I shave and show to the world that I have nothing in the world to call mine own, nothing save the name of God, which is my sole treasure. Thus equipped with His love, based on renunciation, shall I wander from door to door and it may be that they will not dismiss one who will prove by his life that he cares for his fellow-sufferers and for God alone.' The poet says in the colophon, 'Forbear my friend, my god, this idea and do not close the work you have so happily begun at Navadvip.'

The second song.

In the third song written by the same writer, Govinda, there is an appeal to the people of Navadvip.[1] 'O people of the great city, are you not conscious of the mishap that is going to befall you. Stretch your loving arms, O citizens, all at once and stop him. He has brought the highest message for you. Do not allow him to go. He is your dearest, you will realise it after he has gone away. The followers all beat their breasts in grief. Says Govinda Ghosh,

The third one.

[1] "হেদেরে নদীয়াবাসী কার মুখে চাও।
বাহু পসারিয়া গোরাচাঁদেরে ফিরাও॥"

'It would be well and good, if before the unlucky hour came, I could die.'

The fourth song is by Vasudeva Ghosh. He was, as I have already stated, a brother of Govinda Ghosh. Of all poets who have sung of Chaitanya, his name is perhaps the greatest. He is always a master-hand at pathos. He ushers us into the inner apartments of Chaitanya's house on the eve of his departure. Viṣṇupriya, the wife of Chaitanya, is seized with fear, she has not as yet heard of her husband's resolution, but her mind is full of presentiments. She softly murmurs to her companions, "Why is it, dear friends, my heart is overcome by a sudden sorrow? I do not know what it is, but nothing gives me joy. Look at the bank of the Ganges, the green leaves of trees have a pale hue. The bee does not hum nor sit on the flower. The very current of the Ganges seems to have stopped, and the cuckoo's gay note is not heard. Is it only to me that everything seems to be joyless, or to you all, dear friends?"

Viṣṇupriya's fears and sorrows.

Another song by Vasudeva Ghosh pictures Viṣṇupriya as coming from the Ganges.[1] She

[1] পাগলিনী বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া ভিজা বস্ত্র চুলে।
ত্বরা করি বাড়ী আসি শাশুড়ীরে বলে॥
বলিতে না পারে কিছু কাঁদিয়া ফাঁফর।
শচী বলে মাগো এত কি লাগি কাতর॥

is mad with grief. Shehas heard the whispers of a report, but not yet distinctly realised it. For no one could be so cruel as to tell her of what was going to happen. Her long and flowing hair is wet after her bath, but she has not cared to wring out the water. She stands before her mother-in-law and trembles in great grief. She wants to speak something to her, but cries like a child and cannot speak. The mother-in-law is amazed. She asks, 'what is it that ails thee, child?' She warmly embraces her in deep sympathy. Bisṇupriya slowly delivers herself, 'What shall I say mother? I cannot express my feeling, it is the cruelest thing that I have heard. Look at the inauspicious signs around.' She could speak no more, but fell at her mother-in-law's feet in the deep agony of her heart. Vasu Ghosh, the poet, says, 'How shall I console you, loyal soul? The lord of your heart leaves Navadvip to-day.'

Next we pass on to a song by Narahari. Narahari was a native of Srikhanda in the district of Burdwan. He was a Vaidya and a

বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া বলে আর কি কব জননি।
চারিদিকে অমঙ্গল কাঁপিছে পরাণী ॥
নাহিতে পড়িল জলে নাকের বেশর।
ভাঙ্গিবে কপাল মাথে পড়িবে বজর ॥
কাঁদি কহে বাসু ঘোষ কি কহিব সতি।
আজি নবদ্বীপ ছাড়ি যাবে প্রাণপতি ॥

friend of Chaitanya. He must have passed the prime of his life, when Chaitanya was born. Yet this elderly man was devoted to Chaitanya like a child. Even before Chaitanya reached his youth, Narahari had been distinguished as a great poet of Radha-Krisna songs. How dearly Chaitanya loved him, will be understood from the fact that while the former wandered, steeped in ecstacies of his spiritual felicities, in the Deccan, forgetful of all his kith and kin, he once uttered the name of Narahari, calling him in his trances dearer than life and wishing to hear God's name from him again.[1] Narahari says, "To-day Chaitanya leaves Nadia. The current of the Ganges seems to have stopped. The very statues of the gods, of Shiva, Ganapati and others, worshipped in the temples, seem pale and Nature's blossoms suddenly wither. The buds do not bloom, the bees do not hum and cows do not show any inclination to graze in the fields." Says Narahari, 'The city of Nadia cannot bear its grief.'[2]

[1] কথনও বলেন কোথা প্রাণ নরহরি।
হরি নাম শুনে তোমা আলিঙ্গন করি ॥

[2] গোরাচাঁদ ছাড়ি যাবে দেখি ইথে তরঙ্গ রহিত জাহ্নবী ধারা।
শম্ভু ভগবতী গণপতি মূর্ত্তি ছিল হৈল মলিন পারা ॥
তরু লতা ফুল পল্লবিত নহে না বিকাশে পুষ্প সুগন্ধ হীনা।
তাহে না বৈসে না পিয়ে পুষ্পরস না গুঞ্জরে ভ্রমর ভ্রমরী দীনা ॥
পিককুল কলরব বিরহিত না নাচে ময়ূর ময়ূরী সনে।
সারি শুক নানা পাখী আখি ঝুরে নারে উড়িবারে ব্যাকুল মনে ॥

"Chaitanya left his bed-chamber before daybreak, when poor Viṣṇupriya, weary with sleepless watch all night, had just closed her eyes for a moment in sleep. Then did she suddenly awake," says Vasu Ghosh, the poet, "and in the darkness felt the couch of her Lord empty, it seemed that a thunder-bolt had fallen on her head. She wept, losing all control over herself. She came near the door of her mother-in-law's room, and gently murmured in a tone, choked with tears. 'He was there in the room, all night, but just before daybreak has gone away where I know not, I cannot bear the grief, O mother.' The mother's anxieties all night through had not allowed her a moment's sleep. As she caught the gentle bewailing tone of the wife, Sachi rose from her bed with a start, with her tresses all dishevelled. She lighted a lamp and with poor Viṣṇupriya looked hither and thither, but nowhere could he be seen. Then the mother and wife walked in the streets of Nadia, the mother calling aloud Chaitanya by his name. The citizens of Nadia were moved, ten or fifteen of them gathered in each spot and sought the missing youth,—the delight of their home and of their city. On enquiry a wayfarer told them, 'Yes I have seen him. He went past me by the way to the village of Kanchan Nagar. Vasu Ghosh, the poet

fears lest he gets his head shaven, (turns an ascetic).[1]

The mother and the wife.

The next song of Vasu Ghosh says, "The followers of Chaitanya in the morning all gathered in his house and saw Viṣṇupriya lying on the floor of her room like one that was

[1] সুধা খাটে দিলা হাত বজ্র পড়িল মাথায়
বুঝি বিধি মোরে বিড়ম্বিল।
করুণা করিয়া কাঁদে কেশ বেশ নাহি বাঁধে
শচীর মন্দির কাছে গেল॥
শচীর মন্দিরে আসি দুয়ারের কাছে বসি
ধীরে ধীরে কহে বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া।
শয়ন মন্দিরে ছিল নিশি অন্তে কোথা গেল
মোর মুণ্ডে বজর পাড়িয়া॥
গৌরাঙ্গ জাগয়ে মনে নিদ্রা নাহি দু নয়নে
শুনিয়া উঠিল শচী মাতা।
আলু থালু বেশে যায় বসন না রহে গায়
শুনিয়া বধূর মুখের কথা॥
ত্বরিতে জ্বালিয়া বাতি দেখিলেন ইতি উতি
কোন ঠাঁই উদ্দেশ না পাইয়া।
বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া বধূ সাথে কাঁদিয়া কাঁদিয়া পথে
ডাকে শচী নিমাই বলিয়া॥
তা শুনি নদীয়ার লোকে কাঁদে উচ্চৈঃস্বরে শোকে
যারে তারে পুছেন বারতা।
একজন পথে ধায়, দশ জন পুছে তায়
গৌরাঙ্গে দেখেছ যেতে কোথা॥
সে বলে দেখেছি যেতে আর কেহ নাহি সাথে
কাঞ্চন নগরের পথে ধায়।
বাসু কহে আহা মরি আমার শ্রীগৌর হরি
পাছে জানি মস্তক মুড়ায়॥

dead. Sachi sat deeply afflicted at the gate. Then she wept and opened her mouth, 'Who is it that has given him this advice to leave me, his old mother, and Viṣṇupriya, his devoted wife, for life? We do not know who shot us from the dark. What a cruel man must he be, who has turned the head of my child in this way! We were inside the house and did not know by which way he left. But no doubt he has left us. How can we live, thus forlorn?' Vasudeva, the poet, says, 'Sachi looked like one dead after this short speech, and Ishan, the servant of the house, showed by a wave of his hand that the dear one had left Nadia."

He, the youthful soul, in whom there was no other thought than that of his Beloved, and of how to redeem his fellowmen from sin and sorrow, walked quietly to the bank of the Ganges, says Lochan Das of the 16th century. He crossed the river and came to the village of Kanchan Nagar. There he sat under a tree. His fame as a god on this earth, who had brought message from heaven, had already spread far and wide. Men and women of Kanchan Nagar all assembled to see the God-intoxicated youth. They wept to think how handsome he looked, recollecting the hardships of the Sannyas-life, for which he was going to take a solemn vow. The women-folk specially felt for the poor mother and wife deserted by him, but they

all stood in silence, for his presence was divine, making one forget all thoughts of the mundane world. Vasu Deva then sings how Chaitanya came to Katwa and met Keshava Bharati, the apostle of the Vaisnava Order of Madhavendra Puri. Chaitanya bowed before the venerable Vaisnava, who struck with the emotional fervour of the youth rose up and said, 'Who art thou and where art thou bound for?' Chaitanya's eyes were full of tears. He said, 'Accept me as your disciple and give me a place in your Holy Order. I want to be a Sannyasi!' 'The people there' says Vasudeva, 'exclaimed, 'Venerable Bharati, do not take him into the Holy Order. His mother and wife will not be able to bear it, we shall not be able to bear it. He has just stepped into his youth.' Then some of them quoted *slokas*, in which it is laid down that a man can turn an ascetic only after he had passed his fiftieth year, and not before. The divine young man who had so long appealed to Bharati by shedding tears of joy suddenly grew calm, while he saw that they tried to baffle his aim by Sastric authority, and said in deep emotion, to Bharati, 'If before I reach fifty, I die, when shall I have an opportunity of loving my God with whole heart in the company of saintly men like you? You are my master, I have nothing more to say to you.'

The vow of Sannyās.

Then Bharati, moved by the youth's ardour of love, said, 'Do not fear, child, I will initiate you into the life of a Sannyasi.'

The barbar, Madhu Sil, was called at this stage, says Vasu Ghosh, and Chaitanya's beautiful curly hair, which was the pride of his youth and of those who loved him, was cruelly shaved. The women-folk again wept when they saw him break all ties of home, of his country, and take the vow of life-long austerity, which would require him to depend upon what food chance would bring him, to sleep under a tree on the bare ground, and not to see his wife any more in life. But when he rose from his seat after he was shaven, they were surprised to see his person, surrounded with a halo of light. The narrow world was given up for a wider world, petty love was merged in universal love, the fish of the tank was let loose in the sea, the bird's cage was broken, and it was now free in the illimitable sky. A joy consequent on the sudden change became apparent on his face and he bowed, says Vasu Ghosh, to all present. He wore the ascetic's rags, and looked humble in God's love. The people shed silent tears, when Chaitanya addressed them and said, 'I have taken now the holy vow of Sannyas, bless me, all of you, that I may not do any thing to disgrace the sacred vow and my Holy Order and also that I may

meet my God, whom I have sought all these days.'

In Navadvip the followers of Chaitanya were afflicted with a sorrow that passes all account. When he used to dance in the courtyard of Srivas, with his face glowing with the vision of the Highest, they saw before them God in Man. For the whole night spiritual songs and dancing went on in that historic compound, and so great was the fascination of his presence and of his trances that when the day broke, they thought it dawned too early. There were illustrious scholars among his followers even before he had adopted Sannyas, one of whom had once exclaimed, 'If my head be crushed by a thunder-bolt or my only son dies, I may bear it, but not any one abusing our Master.' He was only 22 at this time. In Navadvip the news of his renunciation spread like wild fire. The followers lay sunk in a gulf of woe. Vasudeva Ghosh describes their condition in some songs. One of them runs thus, 'Why has he taken the staff of an ascetic at this beginning of his youth? Why does he wear the ochre-coloured cloth? Woe be to us all! Srivas cries loudly, Gadadhar weeps alone, Mukunda's face is spotted with silent tears. None of them talks, none of them has even the heart to refer to Chaitanya's desertion of Nadia. It is Haridas alone who goes from door to door, consoling those who are in

deep grief. Vasudeva, Narahari and Vakreshwar are overwhelmed with emotion. Haridas failing to remove their grief, stands silent like a statue, with closed eyes, from which trickle down drops of tears.' 'Even those who are Chaitanya's abusers,' says Vrindavan Das, the author of the Chaitanya Bhāgvata, in a song, "feel great sorrow and say, 'If he comes back to Nadia, we will apologise this time.'" Thus Chaitanya's object of Sannyas was fully achieved; for none was now in the great city of Nadia, who did not adore him because of his great renunciation.

Sachi and Visnupriyā suffered intensely. One night Sachi had not a wink of sleep owing to her agony of grief. She rose up at midnight and went to the courtyard of Srivas, where Chaitanya spent days and nights in his emotional joys and trances. There on the bare ground she lay like a poor thing, weeping the rest of the night. About dawn, Malini, wife of Srivas, came out and discovered Sachi in that plight. They were bosom-friends and Malini could ill control her grief at the sight of bereaved Sachi.[1] This we learn from a song by Premdās, one of

1 "বিরহ বিকল ধায়, সোয়াথ নাহিক পায়,
নিশি ভরি নাহি যায় ঘুমে ।
ঘরেতে রহিতে নারি আসি শ্রীবাসের বাড়ী
আঁচল পাতিয়া শুইলা ভূমে ॥
গৌরাঙ্গ জাগয়ে মনে, নিদ্রা নাহি রাত্রি দিনে,
মালিনী বাহির হৈয়া ঘরে ॥

Chaitanya's contemporaries. The same writer says in another song that Visnupriyā practically gave up her usual meals. Day and night she spent alone, and scarcely cared to look at the faces of her dearest friends. It was only when her services were needed to minister to the comforts of Sachi, that she showed some sign of life.

Meanwhile the God-intoxicated youth went from Katwa, losing all control over self, losing all consciousness of the external world. The vision of Krisna was the only reality, and an illusion of Vrinda Groves confronted his sight from every landscape that he visited. He wept for joy when the vision was clear, and wept in sorrow when the vision faded. Nityānanda at this stage led him by a trick to Santipur. He gave Chaitanya to understand that it was the Vrinda Groves, towards which they were journeying. Chaitanya followed Nityānanda in a state of trance. Reaching Santipur, Nityanda left

সচকিত আসি কাছে দেখে শচী পড়ে আছে,
অমনি কাঁদিয়া হাত ধরে ॥
উথলিলা হিয়ার দুঃখ, মালিনীর ফাটে বুক,
ফুকরি কাঁদয়ে উভরায়।
পুনঃ না দেখিয়া তারে পরাণ কেমন করে,
কাঁদিয়া রজনী পোহাইল।
সেই হৈতে প্রাণ কাদে হিয়া মোর নাহি বাধেঁ
কি করি কহগো উপায়।
বাসুদেব ঘোষ কয় গৌরাঙ্গ তোমারি হয়,
নহিলে কি দেখা পাও তার।"

Chaitanya at the house of the saintly Advaitacharya, and himself started for Nadia. Nityananda could not bear the sight of the sorrows of Sachi. The more he thought of her, the more did he grieve within himself and resolved to create an opportunity for an interview between the mother and her son. Hence he had brought Chaitanya to Santipur by playing a trick on him.

But when Nityananda said to Sachi that her son was at Santipur and wished to see her there, " Sachi could not support her grief. She said, 'Is it true then that he has adopted the life of an ascetic and shall never live with us? Is it true that he has cut off his curly hair and wears rags? Is i true that he has taken a beggar's bowl in his hand and the ascetic's staff? If so, how shall I be able to see him in such a condition? Dear child, I will not go to Santipur. I will go to the Ganges and drown myself before I see such a sight.' " This we read in a song composed by Murari Gupta who was present when Nityananda called upon Sachi to deliver the message of Chaitanya's visit to Santipur.

At Santipur.

But the mother at last set out for Santipur. She went ahead, and with her the whole city of Nadia. At the house of Advaita they saw a strange sight. Chaitanya was no more what he had been in the past, he was now a Sannyasi,

he wore the ochre-coloured rags and had the ascetic's staff and bowl in his hand. He thought of God alone and of the miseries of his fellowmen. When he spoke of God with emotion, they all saw the God-vision, when he wept for Him, they all wept with him. The divine youth was altogether different from others and looked like a messenger from heaven. Sachi cried aloud in grief and said, "Why have you shaven your head, child? Is it a sign of your resolution to leave your mother and wife? Alas, how can I live without you? Nityananda is your friend, dear as life, there are your companions, Advaita Gadadhar and Srivas. You used to spend time with them in religious discourses, in spiritual songs and music. Why not do the same in your own city? You are a great teacher, they say. Is it a right thing to desert one's mother and wife, when they are so deeply affectionate? Do you teach this lesson of love and duty to the world?" She could say no more, her voice trembled and tears flowed freely from her eyes. Chaitanya, with joint hands, stood before his mother, he then laid his mother's hands on his head and requested her to bless him. He said nothing more, whereupon Sachi again said, "Is it for this that I gave you education? Your learning is admired everywhere. Does all your scholarship teach you to thrust a dagger into the

Moiher's appeal.

heart of your mother and of your loyal wife?" Then Chaitanya broke his silence and spoke in an humble voice, "Know me, dear mother, to be your affectionate child for ever, Suniti initiated her son, Dhruva, into the path of spirituality and renunciation. He was a mere lad, yet his mother did not stand in his way. Ram left Ayodhya and went to forests for the sake of a sacred pledge. Kausalya, his mother gave permission, though she wept all the while and led a miserable life. Krisna himself left Nanda and Jasoda, his parents, to fulfil his great mission at Mathura Puri. A great object in life must be attained by great sacrifices and I wish that my mother should not stand in the way, for if you do object, it is not in my power to act against your wish. Know mother, God's love alone can heal the bruised heart. I shall be for a good many years at Nilachal (Puri) so near Nadia, for the sake of your love." So humble was his speech, so full of tender feelings for the mother, that though weeping she could not withhold from her son permission to adopt the life he had chosen.

In the great Kirtan festivities which marked the few days of Chaitanya's stay at Advaita's house, trances came upon the young ascetic very often. In an unconscious state, he fell often on the bare floor and Sachi requested his companions to take care, lest he should be hurt by

his falls. She repeatedly asked Nityananda to take care of her son and requested Srivas to stop the Kirtan when the night advanced, lest he should fall ill. 'Alas, poor mother,' cried Murari Gupta in the colophon of one of his songs.

After a few days' stay at Santipur, Chaitanya in great humility requested his friends to continue their kindness towards him, "I have worn rags and left home for good. I have cruelly given up my mother and my wife. The latter told me on the eve of my sannyas, 'The cutting off of your connection with home means leaving me, who am the chief tie of home. Stand there my lord, I will drink poison and die. So your ties of home would be severed, but do not leave your native city.' Tell her, my friends, that I shall be at Puri, from which place mother and she will always receive information about me."

From Santipur Chaitanya started for Puri. There are many songs of great pathos in which the sorrows of the mother and wife are described. Some of these relate to the dreams of Sachi, which are all about her son, whom she never saw again during her long remaining life. In one of these songs she says to her friend, Malini, wife of Çrivasa, "Oh, my friend, I saw in a dream last night that he came to me after a long time. He stood in the compound of our

home and called me in a tender voice. As I heard his voice, forthwith I ran from my room to meet him. He touched the dust of my feet and said, 'I could not bear to live without you, mother. I wandered from place to place and left Puri for your sake. I have come to Nadia to have a sight of your face again.' As he said this I came closer to him and was overjoyed by his touch after this long separation. Merged in happiness that is beyond description, I found my dream suddenly vanished. My mind is since ill at ease, I cannot contain my grief."[1] This song was composed by Vasudeva Ghosh.

Numerous poets, mostly contemporaries of Chaitanya, have described the sorrows of Visnupriya, during each of the twelve months that

[1] আজিকার স্বপনের কথা, শুনলো মালিনী সই,
নিমাই আসিয়াছিল ঘরে।
আঙ্গিনায় দাঁড়াইয়া, গৃহপানে নেহারিয়া,
মা বলিয়া ডাকিল আমারে ॥
ঘরেতে শুইয়া ছিলাম অচেতন বাহির হৈলাম
নিমাইয়ের গলার সাড়া পাইয়া।
আমার চরণের ধূলি, নিল নিমাই শিরে তুলি,
পুনঃ কাঁদে গলাটি ধরিয়া ॥
তোমার প্রেমের বশে ফিরি আমি দেশে দেশে,
রহিতে নারিলাম নীলাচলে।
তোমারে দেখিবার তরে, আসিলাম নৈন্তাপুরে
কাঁদিতে কাঁদিতে ইহা বলে ॥
আইস মোর বাছা বলি, হিয়ার মাঝারে তুলি,
হেনকালে নিদ্রা ভঙ্গ হইল।

constitute a year. One of these poet is Balarama Das. He writes :—

The twelve months' sorrows.

"In the month of February,[1] Chaitanya was born. Visnupriya's past happiness on her husband's anniversary day when he used to be presented with wreaths of flowers and fine apparels, and when the citizens of Navadvip sent him delicious meals prepared at their homes, came to the memory of the poor wife, and she longed for a sight of him, who was now the god of millions. They observed the anniversary of the birthday of her lord with fast and vigil, but the poor wife pined in separation and wept, recollecting the happy days of February and March in the past.

In April, the gardens presented a sight of blooming flowers, and the cuckoo sang. Poor Visnupriya sighed and fled from the sight of Nature's blooming things, as they reminded her of the sweet days passed in her husband's company.

In May, she remembered how handsome her husband looked, putting on the fine *Krisna-keli* cloth, suited to the season. The sweet perfumes of *Kumkum* and sandal were always in readiness to make them cheerful. How dry the world now seemed to the poor wife without him.

[1] I have roughly given the Bengali months their corresponding English names.

In June, Visnupriya mourned remembering that her husband was probably travelling on foot over the hard sandy ground, scorched by the rays of the sun. In July and August, she imagined her husband wandering under the sky with incessant rains pouring on his bare head; thus when Visnupriya saw the sky overcast with clouds, she sighed and wept. In September, numberless boats came and went by the river, how eagerly she longed, poor fond soul, that one of these might bring the treasure of her heart back to home. October was the month of religious festivities; Chaitanya's party used to sing spiritual songs in that month; they enlivened the whole city by their religious music; and the recollection of these pained poor Visnupriya. In November the sky became clear, the clouds dispersed like a broken army, here and there was seen in the sky some remnants of them like a run-away and unarmed enemy. The lotus bloomed and the '*shewali*,' flowers that looked like a lady's nose-ornaments, fell profusely on the earth. She sighed remembering those sweet days, when she wreathed garlands with those flowers to present them to her husband. December's cold brought on again a fresh longing and memories that were both sweet and bitter. But January was the most trying of all months, for it was in this month that he deserted Nadia and turned an ascetic."

These songs, which have all the wealth of poetic details but of which for want of space I have to make a bare mention, were composed by Lochan Das, Bhuban, Sachinandan and other poets of the 16th Century. They are called Bara Mashis or songs of twelve months.

Chaitanya came to a place named Athara Nala near Puri. From there he saw glimpses of the great flag of the Puri Temple, that flashed on high like a streak of lightning. This view of the pompous ensign of the Temple brought on a trance, it seemed as if he had seen the very attire of his God. The flag was red and lined with gold, it brought on the vision of Krishna's purple clothes. He was a scholar of scholars. Descending from the plane of his emotional joy, he discoursed on scholarly subjects in such a fashion that the veterans of the age dared not meet his arguments, but when the emotion came, it appeared like a temporary outburst of beautiful insanity. Beautiful, because, whatever he did and said like a deluded soul in that condition, fascinated all by their charming romance. We read the poems of a great genius, and for the time the unreal exercises a power on us in a far greater degree than the real. Chaitanya's trance was such a poem. From Athara Nala, he ran on madly to the Temple. So great was his speed that his followers could not overtake him.

We need not describe what transpired at Puri after he had reached that place. How the great scholar of that age, Vasudeva, was beaten in a discourse and was carried like a straw in the stream by the fascination of Chaitanya's trances, till he acknowledged the young man to be the guide, the pole star of his future life. We need not describe the pathetic interest that gathers round the story of the monarch Pratap Rudra's earnestness to become the disciple of the young man. We shall not discourse here on the historic interview between Chaitanya and Rama Ray and the religious instructions the latter received from the Master, nor shall we here try to give an account of how Raghunath Das, the illustrious scion of the Saptagram Das family, joined the Holy Order. These are incidents which are written in letters of gold on the pages of the various biographies of Chaitanya. But we shall, on the authority of the songs, give a short account of how greatly his own people at Nadia suffered on account of his leaving that place. These songs illuminate those little corners, which big historians have left unnoticed and obscure, but which in these short poetic accounts have made the whole tale of the Sannyasi interesting and beautiful.

On reaching Puri, Chaitanya thus defined his mission to Nityananda.

The latter's field of activity was to be Bengal,—this was the Master's order "Whomsoever your eyes may meet," said Chaitanya to Nityananda, "You should approach him with instructions on Bhakti. There are those who are proud of their learning and continually argue, meekly should you approach them and impart to them some of the spiritual felicities, which will create a craving for the higher life. The students of Nadia, who only care for scholarship, the sophists and abusers who scoff at religion, should not be abandoned to their fate, but to all, to all indiscriminately, should you preach. Among all should you distribute the treasure of God's love. The scholars of Nadia are always hostile to the religion of sweet emotion. To them also should you open the portals of our new heaven." We have two songs of this nature from the pen of the illustrious poet Balaram Das. In the second of these Chaitanya says, "But I have not yet told you of the most important section, among whom your chief work should be. The destitute and the forlorn, those that are excommunicated by society, the fallen ones, and the sinners should receive your greatest attention and I know you to be pre-eminently fit for this work, for by your nature you are kind to them." And Nityananda respectfully received the command of the Master. With

Adv.ce to Nityananda.

Abhiram Gaurdas, Ramai, Sundarananda and Basu Ghosh he came to Panihati near Calcutta and met Raghava, the scholar, on the bank of the Ganges His heart melted with pity at the sight of the fallen and the destitute. The cruel orthodox society had made them outcasts. Religion in the Hindu community had grown like a narrow pool, to be shut out from public touch for fear of contamination. If a man sinned, he was given up. But Nityananda came like a gushing stream, sweeping everything before him in his majestic march. He embraced the sinners with tears in his eyes and called them brothers. His vast love sought not sanctity by exclusion. Even those that beat him and abused him received his mercy. So that many a ruffian turned remorseful, inspired by his unbounded piety.

When from Puri Nityananda came to Nadia he, first of all, paid a visit to Sachi, who burst into tears at the sight of him. For Nityananda and Chaitanya were always seen together. She could not speak. The grief caused by this meeting, is powerfully described in the songs by Kanudas and Premdas, two contemporary poets.

The citizens of Nadia lay under the shadow of a great grief. Even the abusers of the Master became remorseful. For Chaitanya had harmed none in the world. He was steeped in felicities, which everyone now realised, were

of a higher plane. The scholars missed one who had vindicated the prestige and glory of Navadvip, the boasted seat of learning, by vanquishing in a public debate the far-famed Keshava Kashmiri, who was unmatched in the India of that time for learning. The people now longed for those mystic visions of which, inspired by Chaitanya, they had but caught only a glimpse, The whole of Nadia mourned like one man and looked as under the smarting influence of a great bereavement. Premdas, the contemporary poet, thus describes the condition of Nadia in a song :—

"The citizens of Nadia earnestly inquired of every ascetic and Yogi that passed by the city, 'Have you seen a young Sannyasin named Chaitanya? You might have an opportunity of doing so, for you wander from place to place. He is young and handsome, and sheds tears as one utters the name of Krisna before him. He weeps and smiles and holds soliloquies at the sight of his Krisna, for the vision of his God follows him wherever he goes. Suddenly sometimes he closes his eyes and shows great emotional joy when he communes with Krisna in his soul. He repeats the name of the god of his love and his eyes become full of tears.'

"Yea, have I seen such a one," says one of them, "but he is not a man. People take him for God Himself. He lives on the sea-coast at Puri. People do not go to see the

image of God there. They have found the living God, whose spiritual dances, music and discourses hold them spell-bound night and day."

Chaitanya, shortly after arriving at Puri, sent the young scholar Jagadananda to Nadia with a message to his mother. The poets Madhavi Das and Chandra Sekhar have composed songs to describe the incident.[1]

[1] নীলাচল হৈতে শচীরে দেখিতে
আইল জগদানন্দ।
রহি কত দূরে দেখে নদীয়ারে
গোকুল পুরীর ছন্দ॥
ভাবয়ে পণ্ডিত রায় পাই কিনা পাই,
শচীরে দেখিতে এই অনুমানে যায়॥
লতা তরু যত দেখে শত শত
অকালে খসিছে পাতা।
রবির কিরণ না হয় স্ফুরণ
মেঘগণে দেখে রাতা॥
শাখে বসি পাখী মুদি দুটি আঁখি
ফল জল তেয়াগিয়া।
কাঁদয়ে ফুকরী ডুকরি ডুকুরি
গোরাচাঁদ নাম লৈয়া॥
ধেনু যুথে যুথে দাঁড়াইয়া পথে
কার মুখে নাহি রা।
মাধবী দাসের ঠাকুর পণ্ডিত
পড়িল আছাড়ি গা॥
ক্ষণেক রহিয়া, চলিল উঠিয়া, পণ্ডিত জগদানন্দ।
নদীয়া নগরে, দেখে ঘরে ঘরে, কাহার নাহিক স্পন্দ॥
না মেলে পসার, না করে আহার, কারো মুখে নাহি হাসি।
নগরে নাগরী, কাঁদয়ে গুমরি, থাকয়ে বিরলে বসি॥
দেখিয়া নগর, ঠাকুরের ঘর, প্রবেশ করিল যাই।
আধমরা হেন, পড়ি আছে যেন, অচেতন শচী আই॥

Jagadananda came from Puri to Nadia in order to see Sachi. From afar the city looked as if shrouded in a gloom, like the Vrinda groves once deserted by Krisna. The scholar was afraid lest Sachi had died of a broken heart. The very trees seemed shorn of leaves, and in the sky the clouds seemed to cover the sun's rays. The birds perched mute on the boughs of the trees and the cows stared with unmeaning looks. The scholar

"প্রভুর রমণী, সেই অনাথিনী, হইয়া প্রভুরে হারা।
পড়িয়া আছেন মলিন বসনে, মুদিত নয়নে ধারা ॥
বিশ্বাসী প্রধান, কিঙ্কর ঈশান, নয়নে শোকাশ্রু ঝরে।
তবু রক্ষা করে, শাশুড়ী বধূরে, সর্ব্বদা শুশ্রূষা করে ॥
দাস দাসী সব, আছয়ে নীরব, দেখিয়া পথিক জন।
শুধাইছে তারে, কহ মো সবারে, কোথা হৈতে আগমন ॥
পণ্ডিত কহেন, মোর আগমন, নীলাচল পুর হৈতে।
গৌরাঙ্গ সুন্দর, পাঠাইলা মোরে, তোমা সবারে দেখিতে ॥
শুনিয়া উল্লাস, মালিনী শ্রীবাস, যত নবদ্বীপ বাসী।
মরা ছেলে ছিল, অমনি ধাইল, পরাণ পাইল আসি ॥
মালিনী আসিয়া, শচী বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া, উঠাইল ত্বরা করি।
বলে চাহি দেখ, পাঠাইলা লোক, তত্ত্ব লৈতে গৌরহরি ॥
শুনিয়া বচন, সজল নয়ন, শচীরে কহিল গিয়া।
আর একজন, চলিল তখন, শ্রীবাস মন্দিরে ধাঞয়া ॥
শুনি শচীমাই, সচকিত চাই, দেখিলেন পণ্ডিতেরে।
কহে তার ঠাঁই, আমার নিমাই, আসিয়াছে কদ্দূরে ॥
দেখি প্রেমলীলা, স্নেহের মহিমা, পণ্ডিত কাঁদিয়া কয়।
সেই গৌরমণি, যুগে যুগে জানি, তুয়া বিনা কারো নয় ॥
গৌরাঙ্গ চরিত, এ হেন অমৃত, সবাকারে শুনাইয়া।
পণ্ডিত রহিলা, নদীয়া নগরে, সবাকারে সুখ দিয়া ॥
এ চন্দ্রশেখর, পশুর দোসর, বিষয় বিষেতে প্রীত।
গৌরাঙ্গ চরিত, পরম অমৃত, তাহাতে না লয় চিত ॥

was deeply moved to see the city under the shadow of a great grief. He sat for a while at a spot on its outskirts, and had not the heart to enter it.

"After a while he rose up and visited the houses. The inmates were like statues, none said a word. In the market, there was not the usual crowd ; it seemed they cared not for their daily meals and the comforts of life. Silently did he advance and enter the house of Chaitanya. Sachi lay there as half-dead and close by her sat Visnupriya, the true wife, with closed eyes from which dropped tears. Their chief and trusted attendant, Ishan, wiped away his own tears with one hand, and with the other ministered to the needs of the poor mother and wife. The other servants and maid-servants silently did their duties and seeing a stranger they asked, "From where hast thou come, Oh Brahmin?" and he replied, "I have come from Puri. Your dear Chaitanya has sent me to enquire about you." Their eyes grew tearful at this news, and one of them forthwith ran to communicate the tidings to Sachi, another went to Srivas's house to acquaint Malini with this gladdening news. They were all happy beyond description at this, and Malini, Srivasa and many other citizens of Nadia at once thronged at Chaitanya's house. Malini entered the inner apartment, and raised Sachi and Visnupriya both by the hand, for they lay in a

state of stupor. She said to them, 'Look here, your Chaitanya has sent tidings through a young scholar. Sachi rose with a start and saw Jagadananda before her. She enquired, 'Is my son coming? Say how far he is from here.' Jagadananda was deeply moved and described to all present the never-to-be-old account of Chaitanya's devotion and love. All present eagerly caught each word that fell from the scholar's lips and felt their sorrows partly removed by his words. He stayed in the city for some time at the earnest request of the people there."

This song was composed by Chandra Sekhar about 350 years ago. He was not a contemporary of Chaitanya, but undoubtedly heard stories about him from those who were Chaitanya's friends and companions.

Humour in Old Bengali Literature.

It has been very often said, and not without truth, that, generally speaking, the whole range of Old Indian Literature seems to be lacking in the sense of humour. There are, no doubt, attempts on the part of authors to make their readers laugh, but even those who have risen to the highest pinnacle of literary fame and acquired an undying reputation, have failed to give those fine touches which cut like sharp swords and pierce like the point of a needle. Indian humour is sometimes seen to verge on the grotesque. The Court-fool's buffoonery finds its inexhaustible source of mirth in culinary subjects, and even the great Kalidas who is all refinement, becomes dull, if not coarse, when he introduces the Court-buffoon. The two lines of Valmiki, in which Rama addresses Laksman, pointing to the slow steps by which the crane moves on the bank of the lake Pampa, certainly in quest of fish, are memorable as they expose the hypocrite who tries to pass for a saint. 'Look there, O Lakshman, the crane, virtuous soul, moves in slow steps on the bank of the Pampa, fearing lest it should trample any living thing under its feet.'[1]

[1] শনৈঃ শনৈঃ ক্ষিপেৎ পাদৌ প্রাণিণাং বধশঙ্কায়া ।
সৌমিত্রে পশ্য পম্পায়াং বকো পরমঃ ধার্ম্মিকঃ ॥

In Valmiki's age, there were surely people, who walked slowly and cautiously, avoiding as far as possible treading the poor insects grovelling on the earth. The enemies of this religious sect said that some of these people, who were so scrupulous in regard to worms and insects, would not shrink from murdering men for some selfish purpose. Who knows that Valmiki did not hit at these people by these two lines? The Katha Sarit Sagar has no doubt many fine and acute touches of humour. But as my business is not to deal with any epoch of Sanskrit Literature I must come down to the Vernacular of this province.

Humour in the hands of European writers has often been a powerful means of exposing the vices and weaknesses of a political sect. It has also been directed to expose the flaws and foibles of individuals, to lower them in the public opinion. Robert Burns said that sometimes his one line of humour created ten enemies. Dean Swift, Butler and others took for their subjects great political vices, and their exposure of these has been by means of fables and stories of a most effective and convincing nature.

No sectarian jealousy.

In the quiet social life of Bengal such humour is unknown. The old Bengali Literature often displays a wealth of genuine and intrinsic poetry and consist, generally speaking, of mere folk-songs. The poems were sung

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mostly before the multitudes, who were illiterate. No factional or sectarian jealousy inspired them, as they had absolutely no political life. They had no hand in administration. So when they were oppressed, they prayed to God for redress, and now and then related their story of misfortune before a sympathetic audience. Thus we find Kavi Kankan, speaking of Muhammad Sheriff's mal-administration; it is a plain, pathetic story, which shows a spirit of high resignation on the part of the poet, but nowhere that bitterness of the soul, which seeks expression in pointed remarks and vituperations. In one of the earliest of our poems, Manik Chandra Rajar Gan, we find the oppressor, whose name is not given, described as a 'Bāngāl,' with a flowing beard who came from the south.[1] The way in which this reference is made to the bearded man, is pungent, and the mention of his long flowing beard is merely to hold him up to ridicule, but beyond this there is no attempt at humour. The story ends in pathos as is usual in such descriptions. But in the 16th century, when the Moslem invaders desecrated the Hindu temples and committed cruel atrocities, the Hindus were not slow to retaliate when they found an opportunity. Here we find many poets writing in a pungent and humorous tone

[1] "ভাটি হৈতে আইল বাঙ্গাল লম্বা লম্বা দাড়ি।"

about the Mollas, Khonkars and Miahs. Vansivadan's account of Husan Kazi is full of sprightly humour. Among those who desecrated a temple of Manasa Devi, in Vansivadan's account, was one Kalu Miah, son of Takiya Jola. The family surname 'Jola' shows that he belonged to a low class of Muhammadan weavers. "Kalu Miah declared that all the Goilas (milkmen), who worshipped Manasa Devi, should be killed. His cousin Hazi Miah, whose father's avocation was to wipe the feet of his master after the mud was washed off, and who was a brother of Tunia Jola, suggested that it would be cruel to kill the Hindus, but their houses should be burnt, so that they might be killed by fire and not by human hands."[1] The mixture of Urdu in the lines, the word খালাত and the contempt indicated in পা পোছাত add to the humour of the passage. Even the archaic form তাঞ্জি is used humorously. Vijoy Gupta, the poet of the Manasa-cult, who flourished in the 15th century, describing this contact of the Goalas with the Muhammadan iconoclasts, shows considerable wit. He describes

A mahomedan harem.

1 " কালুমিঞা নাম তার টকিয়া জোলার পুত্র ।
সে বলে মারিয়া ফেল গোয়ালার গোত্র ॥
তাহার খালাত ভাই নাম হাজি মিঞা ।
পা পোছাত পুত্র টুনিয়া জোলার ভায়া ॥
তাঞ্জি বলে হিন্দু মারিয়া কাজ নাই ।
আগুন লাগাইয়া ঘর বাড়ি কর ছাই ॥ "

the wife of the Kazi in the following verses.[1] 'The old maid-servant came to the outer apartments with the news that the mistress of the house was coming there. Some of them said, 'What can be the reason that the venerable lady, the mother of the Khonkar, is coming herself? I must go to pay my Salam first.' The old lady, surrounded by her female attendants, appeared there and the cry went out, 'Stop ye, who are talking. There comes the venerable lady.' She was so old that she could hardly see things even with her spectacles on. Some of the party said, 'How is it? What makes you come here, grand-dame?' The two brothers came in and salamed her." It is difficult to convey an idea of the humour, which is hidden in the quaint archaic words with a sparkling of Urdu, that we find in the original, by translating the passage into English. Not only the Muhammadans but the Hindu poets sometimes do not spare the people of their own community, but

[1] "ধাই আসি জানাইল বাহির দখলে।
কেহ বলে কেন আইলে খোনকারের ধাই।
আগে যাইঞা আমি সেলাম জানাই॥
আগে পাছে বান্দি সব বুড়া বিবি চলে।
এইরূপে ধাইঞা গেল বাহির দখলে॥
রহ রহ বলে হেথায় বেগমে।
বুড়া বিবি আসিয়াছে না দেখি খসমে॥
কেহ বলে কেন আইলে ঠাকুর দিদি আই।
আগু হৈয়া সেলাম করিল দুই ভাই॥"

lampoon them. We come across many passages in which East Bengal people and their dialects are ridiculed. Most celebrated of these is Mukundaram's satire of the East Bengal boat-men. When the ship of Dhanapati was going to be wrecked in the sea by a great storm, the Bāngāl Majhis on board the ship cried, 'Harui, Harui, Oh papa, Oh papa, lost are we in this foreign country.' One said, 'Behold, we are entirely helpless now. The dry fish and other stores, in fact all that we had, have gone to the bottom of the sea.' Another said, 'My store of turmeric is gone, my youthful wife I left at home in a rage. What is the good of this cursed existence?' Another boatman said, 'It is the stars, brethren, that have brought on this evil day, my heart longs to see my kith and kin.' The last of them said 'It will be soon over. I shall no more see my wife and children."[1] The reader may wonder

"The Bāngāls."

[1] "বাঙ্গাল কাঁদেরে হুডুর বাপাই বাপাই।
কুক্ষণে আসিয়া প্রাণ বিদেশে হারাই॥
আর বাঙ্গাল বলে বাই হইল অনাথ।
হর্ব্বধন হরি নিল হুকুতার পাত॥
আর বাঙ্গাল বলে বাই কইতে বড় লাজ।
অলদি গুড়া বাস্থা গেল জীবনে কি কাজ॥
যুবতী যৌবনবতী ত্যজিলাম রোষে।
আর বাঙ্গাল বলে দুঃখ পাই গ্রহ দোষে॥
ইষ্ট মিত্র কুটুম্বের লাগে মায়া মো।
আর বাঙ্গাল বলে না দেখিলাম মাগু পো॥"

where the humour is in the above passage. Yet it is a passage possessing great humour. It is interspersed with many words of Eastern Bengal dialects, words, which would make a Bāngāl the laughing stock in an assemblage of cockmys. The word 'Hurui,' a mere ejaculation, expressing sudden distress, is purely an Eastern expression, 'Bapui' 'Bapui' is the Eastern Bengal form of 'Bapre Bap.' The Eastern Bengal men will say বাই, where the Bengali of Western districts says ভাই, and ব্যাসা in the place of ভাসিয়া. The Eastern rustics in the backward districts cannot or do not pronounce স, and they invariably pronounce it as হ. In the place of হ they often use the softer অ; these are illustrated by the words হর্ব্ব, অলদি and হুকুতা. The word মাগু is also a slang word, denoting wife. Reference to হুকতা or হুটকি, dry fish also is a sneer on the Bāngāls of the Chittagong side, who relish this food, abhorred by most people of other districts. Words like যৌবনবতী show the characteristic attempt of the Bengal rustics at bombastic expressions which make them ridiculous. My remarks will, I trust, prove that the wit shown by our poets in ridiculing Bāngāls, is often couched in a form, which only a Bengali can fully appreciate, by reading the text in original Bengali. In the Chaitanya Bhāgvata, written about 400 years ago, we find that Chaitanya himself used often to scoff at Eastern Bengal by

imitating some of the queer words of their dialects, though he himself was of Eastern Bengal extraction.[1] This he of course did when he was quite young and when the spiritual life had not dawned on him. Many of the old poets have tried to show their wit at the cost of East Bengal men. Mukunda Ram sneers at the physician class while describing the new settlers in Guzrat. It shows that he had no trust in the efficacy of medicines. He depicts the country-physician as busy with rare herbs and medicinal plants in the chamber of the patient, but beating a retreat unnoticed by others by means of the back-door when he finds the case hopeless.

The humour in Shaiva songs.

The Shaiva songs are characterised by much witty writing and many humorous sketches. They are mostly of an indecent nature. Shiva's agricultural operations in the field, his marriage in old age, his drug-eating and quarrel with his wife, her jealousy and his trouble, have formed an inexhaustible source of mirth to our

[1] শ্রীহট্টিয়াগণ বলে হয় হয়।
তুমি কোন জাতি তাহা কহ মহাশয়॥
পিতা মত আছি করি যাবৎ তোমার।
বল দেখি শ্রীহট্টে জন্ম না হয় কাহার॥
তাবৎ শ্রীহট্টি গণে চালেন ঠাকুর।
যাবৎ তাহার ক্রোধ না হয় প্রচুর॥
......কেহ যায় ঠেঙ্গা লইয়া।
লাগালি না পেয়ে যায় তর্জ্জিয়া গর্জ্জিয়া॥"

country-folk for centuries. Vijay Gupta, Vansivadan, Rameswar are standard writers, whose humour was once much praised. They now often appear coarse to us, but the standard of humour changes in every country as people gradually become more and more refined. Besides when a poet knows that his poems will be sung before a large audience, consisting mainly of rustic-folk, he cannot indulge in refined writing, as too much of subtlety will escape appreciation by the illiterate multitudes. The Shaiva songs are full of admiration and love for the Great God, though he is occasionally held up to ridicule. An utter carelessness and neglect for worldly prosperity, and the embracing of a life of abject poverty, are the characteristic traits of the Great God, offering vulnerable points on which all these humorous sketches are based. But the poets tease and expose him very much in the same manner in which children treat their grandsire, taking delight in attacking his weak points, due to age, but nevertheless having a sincere attachment and love for him. We find in a sketch by Rameswar Shiva gradually losing ground while quarrelling with his young wife. The words rise high, but how long can an old man, as he is depicted to be, maintain his arguments with a beautiful young consort, whose tears come to the rescue of speeches, and finally she expresses her resolve to leave the old husband

and go to her father's house. This was the most crushing blow for which the Great God was not at all prepared. Indignantly did Pārvati take her two young sons by the hand and at once set out for the Himalayas, the abode of her father. Shiva tried to apologise, but to no avail. He even attempted to push her back, but the fair wife was strong enough to return the push with force, which made the Great God very much like a ship, tossed on one side by a gust of wind. She really carried out her threat and passed out of sight; it was no joke. When actually things came to such a pass, 'Shiva was surprised, he helplessly looked on all sides' and looking at the sage Narada, who stood near, said with a sigh, 'What are you thinking of, Oh sage? Don't you see my condition? She has thrown me overboard into the sea.'[1]

Shiva helpelss in his quarrel with Parvati.

But none of them can measure their lance with Bhārat Chandra in depicting old Shiva. He had the advantage of getting into his hand all the rich materials left by the earlier poets, so he improved upon them and added to his descriptions the lustre of his own poetic genius. I shall in course of this lecture again allude to the old song of Shiva and show the poetry and

[1] "রামেশ্বর বলে ঋষি বৈসে ভাব কি।
পাথারে ফেলিয়া গেল পর্ব্বতের ঝি॥"

wit with which Bhārat Chandra has invested it. Meanwhile I will reproduce here a sketch by Vansivadan (16th Century) which is very vivid in the original, its naïve humour being particularly amusing. It describes the quarrelsome sage Asta Vakra, an old man with deformed limbs.

The Sage Aṣtabakra.

"The sage Asta Vakra, son of Aṇgira, had, as his name implies, his limbs deformed in eight places. On his shoulder hung the sacred threads. He was a hunchback, his neck was bent, his eyes and mouth, arms and feet had similar deformities, which at once struck the observer. His voice was unnaturally shrill. He approached Kartik, the reputed general of the army of gods, limping and with slow steps. He bent a little over his staff and thus addressed the young god Kartik, 'Tell me, Parvati's son, what you mean to do. What is the reason that you are so proud. Your father Shiva is a notorious drug-eater and lives by begging. He places his wife, your stepmother, on his head. A skull serves him for a pot. How could Daksha, his father-in-law, have respect for such a person. You were born in a jungly place, overgrown with reeds. Your mother is Kali, whom we all know. I need not waste more words with you. Your father knows what we, sages, can do and cannot do.' Behind Kartik stood Jayanta, the son of the god Indra.

The old crippled sage eyed him with contempt and said, 'We all know of your incestuous father's conduct. Vasistha cursed him and though ruler of heaven, he was afflicted with leprosy. The sage Durvasa's curse once made his heaven abandoned by the Goddess of luck. You, stripling, you have come here to rouse a sage's ire again,—evidently some grim tragedy awaits you. You are laughing at my deformed limbs. My curse will be on you.' As he said so, Jayanta ran away in fear and Kartik himself tried to hide himself behind other gods."[18]

[1] "অষ্টবক্র নাম মুনি অঙ্গিরার পুত্র ।
অষ্ট অঙ্গ বাঁকা তার কাঁধে যজ্ঞ সূত্র ॥
বাঁকা কাকালি গলা বাঁকা হাত পাও ।
নাক মুখ চক্ষু বাঁকা বাঁকা কাড়ে রাও ॥
খঞ্জিয়া খঞ্জিয়া আসে কার্ত্তিকের আগে ।
লড়ি ভরে উভা হৈয়া কহিবার লাগে ॥
'কি চাস পার্ব্বতী পুত্র ক' আমার ঠাঁই ।
মো সবার আগে তোর এতেক বড়াই ॥
বাপ তোর ভাঙ্গর চোর স্বভাবে ভিখারি ।
মাথায় বহিয়া ফিরে আপনার নারী ॥
কপালী কারণে দক্ষ যজ্ঞে কৈল হেলা ।
দক্ষ শাপে শ্মশানেতে প্রেত লৈয়া খেলা ॥
কালীর পোলা তুই জন্ম শরবনে ।
মো সবার বলাবল তোর বাপ জানে ॥
কার্ত্তিকের পাছে দেখি জয়ন্ত কুমার ।
কোপ করি মহামুনি বলে আরবার ॥
তোর বাপ হয়েছিল বশিষ্ঠের নারী ।
মুনি শাপে কুষ্ঠ হৈল সর্ব্ব অঙ্গ ভরি ॥
আর বার দুর্ব্বাসা করিল লক্ষ্মী নাশ ।
হেন মুনি আগে আইস মরিবার আশ ॥

The characters of Bhāru Dātta and Murari Seal, drawn by Mukundaram, in the 16th Century, while representing the craftiness of Bengali rustic folk, are notably humorous, especially that of Murari Seal, the money-lender. Kalketu, the hunter, gets a diamond ring of fabulous value from the goddess Chandi, and goes to Murari Seal to sell it. Murari owes Kalketu a small amount and fearing that his visit is for demanding his dues, goes at once to the inner apartment of his house to evade his creditor. Murari's wife meets the hunter and tells him pointblank that her husband is not at home, he has gone to collect interest from his debtors. The wife asks Kalketu to get for her some fuel and forest plums, promising that the next day his new and old bills will both be paid. But Kalketu says that he has not come for payment of arrear dues, but he has a valuable ring to dispose of. When the wily moneylender, so long playing the part of an eavesdropper, hears of a transaction out of which he is likely to make something, he enters his outer mansion by the back-door. He carries in his

Murari Seal.

হাত পাও বাঁকা দেখি অপজ্ঞান মনে।
সর্ব্বদেব বিনাশিব ইন্দ্র আদি সনে॥
এতশুনি জয়ন্ত উঠিয়া দিল নড়।
কার্ত্তিক হইল সব দেবের আগুড়।"

hands scales and a purse for bargaining. Appearing before the hunter, he charges him for not coming to his house as often as he used to do. Kalketu's reply is straightforward, characterised by a sincere and becoming courtesy, which is shown in contrast with the wiliness of the merchant. The haggling of the merchant is interesting. It shows the greed of Bengali merchants of those days and their absolute want of integrity in dealing with their customers. He first tries to get the ring without paying anything at all to Kalketu. Its price is lakhs, but Murari putting it in the scale notes the weight to its last grain. The weight is 16 *ratis* and 2 *dhans*. Murari after satisfying himself as regards the weight, purses his brow, and says with an air of indifference, 'No gold or silver is this, my friend, it is bell-metal polished with care, hence it looks bright!' Then like a Daniel he sits in judgment and calculates its price minutely. 'Per *rati* you may have ten *gandas* of *cowries*, the price of two *dhans* will be five *gandas* more. The price of the ring comes to eight *pans* and five *gandas* of cowries, now I owe you for game one *boori* and a half. The total, therefore, is eight *pans* and two and a half *boories* of *cowries*. But the whole of this need not be paid in cash. Take a portion of the price in cowries and the rest in dust of rice.' Kalketu had learnt the real price of the ring from Chandi. He is a person not

given to prolific speaking. He merely says, 'Give me back my ring. Let me go to some other merchant.' The moneylender says, 'Well, will I agree to give you five *batas* more. You won't find any dishonesty in me. I had money transactions with your father Dharmaketu. I see you are far cleverer. Kalketu briefly replies, 'We need not quarrel over the matter, return the ring, I shall go elsewhere.' Murari says, 'All right, I give you two and a half *boories* more. You need not take rice dust, all will be paid in cowries.'[1] This knavery has been undoubtedly the cause of the fall of the Bengali

[1] "সোনারূপা নহে বাপা এ বেঙ্গা পিতল।
ঘসিয়া মাজিয়া বাপা করেছ উজ্জ্বল॥
রতি প্রতি হইল বীর দশ গণ্ডা দর।
দুধানের কড়ি আর পাঁচগণ্ডা ধর॥
অষ্টপণ পঞ্চগণ্ডা অঙ্গুরীর কড়ি।
মাংসের পিছিলা বাকী ধারি দেড় বুড়ি॥
একুনে হইল অষ্টপণ আড়াই বুড়ি।
কিছু চালু চালু খুদ কিছু লহ কড়ি॥
কালকেতু বলে খুড়া মূল্য নাহি পাই।
যে জন অঙ্গুরী দিল দিব তার ঠাঁই॥
বেনে বলে দরে বাড়াইলাম পঞ্চবট।
আমা সঙ্গে সওদা করি না পাবে কপট॥
ধর্ম্মকেতু ভায়া সঙ্গে ছিল নেনা দেনা।
তাহা হৈতে দেখি বাপ বড়ই সেয়ানা॥
কালকেতু বলে খুড়া না কর ঝগড়া।
অঙ্গুরী লইয়া আমি যাই অন্য পাড়া॥
বেনে বলে দরে বাড়াইলাম আড়াই বুড়ি।
চালু সুদ না লই গণি লও কড়ি॥"

merchants' trade. The character of Bharu Datta, drawn by Kavi Kankan, is another instance of the craftiness of a Bengali, and I am afraid, the species is not extinct like the Dodo of Madagascar Island. The humour with which Kavi Kankan and Madhavacharya invest this character, was at one time much appreciated. He is introduced by Kavi Kankan in the court of Kalketu just after the latter has risen to royal eminence from the humble life of a hunter, by the grace of Chandi. Bharu Datta approaches the hunter-king on the following day, with a basket full of unripe banana fruits for presentation to the king, with his brother-in-law behind him as his companion. Bharu Datta comes to the court,—on his forehead are some proud marks indicative of the religious sect to which he belongs. His outer coat is torn in places, but his *cocha* falls down to its full length. A long reed pen has its refuge on one of his ears. He salutes the king and calls him uncle. He carries a piece of worn out carpet with him, which he spreads and sitting on it, stretches his arm enthusiastically and states his qualifications. 'Behold, Oh monarch, I am here, I wish to settle in your kingdom. Among the Kayasthas in point of social honour, put my name first. I belong to a reputed Datta family of the village Amalhara. I have two wives, both are *kulins*, one of the Ghosh and the other of the

Bharu Datta.

Bose family, and my daughter has been married to a member of the Mitra family. Kayasthas living on both sides of the Ganges take meals in my house without scruple. They honour me by presenting bell-metal cups and clothes and ornaments, and no cook is employed in my house.'[1]

Most of these are lies. Kalketu, the hunter-king belongs to one of the lowest castes of the Hindu society. Bharu, a Kayastha, wants to glorify the king by calling him uncle. The import of the last line is that no *kulin* of any community would eat food cooked by even his fellow castemen of a distant village, but would cook his food himself. This was the custom even fifty years ago. Bharu wants to prove that his prestige in society is so high that all Kayasthas, the Kulins not excepted, unhesitatingly take rice cooked at his house.

The astrologer driven away.

Kavi Kankan's whole poem is interspersed with witty sayings, when an astrologer called in by the merchant Dhanapati, does not approve of the date fixed by the latter and calls it inauspicious, the merchant shows his respect to the Brahmin astrologer by ordering his servants

[1] ভেট লয়ে কাঁচকলা পশ্চাতে ভারুর শালা
আগে ভাড়ুদত্তের প্রয়াণ।
ফোঁটা কাটা মহাদন্ত ছেঁড়া কাপড় কোঁচা লম্ব
শ্রবণে কলম লম্ববান॥

to turn him out from his presence.[1] These old people whose regard for Brahmins was unbounded, are thus often found to treat them with outward respect simply to serve some particular end. They were required to quote texts from the Sastras in support of the actions of the rich men. If they gave an independent opinion, they were turned out. Kavi Kankan's hit on this point is humorous in as much as Brahminical dignity is shown to waver before aristocratic caprice. The humour of the tale chiefly rests in the fact that the poet himself is a Brahmin.

The Çaktas and the Vaisnavas.

Towards the latter end of the 17th century, an animated quarrel between Sāktas and Vaisnavas was the most striking feature of the Hindu society. There is no record of actual bloodshed in the strife, but we find Saktas sometimes following the corpse of a Vaisnava worthy and clapping their hands with loud ejaculations, declaring that the upstart (Vaisnava) is rightly served with death for his folly in adopting the creed. Dasarathi, the poet, says that the true Vaisnava will on no account call ink by its ordinary name Kāli, for it is the name of the goddess worshipped by the Saktas. They will call it by its Persian name of Shehai; Java

[1] এমন শুনিয়া সাধু মুখ করে বাঁকা।
নফরে ডাকিয়া তার গলে মারে ধাক্কা॥

flowers with which Saktas usually worship Kāli, are contemptuously named by the Vaisnavas as *ora*[1] flowers. A devout Vaisnava will on no account name Bel leaves as sacred to the Vaisnavas, but contemptuously calls them Te Faringa. The poet further says that these upstart Vaisnavas will shudder if any one utters the name of Kāli in their presence. These people feigning a great knowledge of the Sastras, declare that the shrine of Vadarikasram to be not worth a straw. The poet's scathing remarks on the prevailing manners and customs of the Vaisnavas will be found in his Pravas Milan. He says, 'The lay Vaisnavas indiscriminately sit to dine together; the washerman, the pariah, the grocer and the Bagdi form but one caste in the dinner hall. They can take a woman with children, as wife, paying Re 1-4-0 to their religious preceptor, and a Muhammadan convert enjoys as high a prestige in their community as a *kulin*. . They exhort people to follow the creed of their leaders and poets, Srinivas, Vidyapaty and Nityananda Das, and the portals of learning become open to them by

[1] Java flower seems to have been brought to India from the island of Java, though in the latter-day Sanskrit works the word finds a place as in the line जवाकुसुमसङ्काशं "but this hymn cannot be earlier than the time when Java was first known to the Indians. In Java this species of flower is called by its name "Ora"—a name which is still known in the countryside here and occur very frequently in old Bengali Literature.

merely naming these men, so they go on freely discussing the Sastras.[1]

The illustrious poet Ram Prasad Sen, who is known for his piety and spiritual devotion to Kāli, has several pungent verses against Vaisnavas, that were no doubt relished by the orthodox Sāktas of his time. He describes two Vaisnavas, who had come to the house of a villager and become his guest, 'They wore long outer coats, and turbans of purple cloth. They had on their back fine blankets, the begging bowls they held in hand were of picturesque shape. On their necks were strings of Gunja seeds and all over their persons marks bearing God's name. The manners of the brothers were curious. Each of them carried on his back a bag containing seven or eight books on the doctrines of the sect. They knew well the art of deceiving the foolish

[1] গৌরাং ঠাকুরের ভণ্ড বেঙ্গরা।
যত অকাল কুষ্মাণ্ড লেংড়া ॥
কি আপদ করেছেন স্থষ্টি হরি।
বলে গৌর ডাক রসনা।
গৌর মন্ত্রে উপাসনা ॥
নিতাই বলে নৃত্য করে ধূলায় গড়াগড়ি।
গৌর বলে আনন্দে মেতে, একত্র ভোজন ছত্রিশ জেতে,
বাগ্দী, ধোপা, কলু, নাপিতে একত্র সমস্ত ॥
বিল্বপত্র আর জবার ফুল, দেখতে নারেন চক্ষুর শূল।
কালী নাম শুন্‌লে কাণে হস্ত ॥
গোসাঞিকে পাঁচসিকা দিয়া, ছেলে শুদ্ধ করেন বিয়া,
জ্যাত্যাংশে কুলীন বড় নেড়া।

people of the countryside. Each had two mistresses as attendants; and their eyes, deep sunk within the sockets, looked red, they were like the grinding stone for preparing the Ganja drug. They often exclaimed, 'O Virabhadra, O Advaita' feigning noble emotions which were but morbid sentimentalism. The lower classes of people appreciated these exclamations most. They turned into their great admirers and fell prostrate in the dust to show their reverence. Some became so excited with respect that they entreated the brothers to be guests at their houses and tried all means to please them. All the inmates of the house stood waiting to carry out the least wish of these brothers, the host always feeling a reverential fear, lest he should commit any transgression in showing hospitality and thus become a sinner."[1]

Bharat Chandra Ray himself, though he occasionally wrote exquisite verses in praise of Krisna, seemed at times to be hostile towards the people who professed the Krisna-cult. While

ভজহরি শ্রীনিবাস, বিদ্যাপাত নিতাই দাস
শাস্ত্র ইহাদের অগোচর নাহি কিছু।
এক একজন কিবা বিদ্যাবন্ত করেন কিবা সিদ্ধান্ত
বদরিকাকে ব্যাখ্যা করেন কচু ॥

[1] "খাসা চীরা বহির্বাস রাঙ্গা চীরা মাথে।
চিকণ গুধরি গায় বাকা কোৎকা হাতে ॥
মুঞ্জ গুঞ্জ ছড়া গলে ঠাঁই ঠাঁই হাব।
দুই ভাই ভজে যারা সৃষ্টি ছাড়া ভাব ॥

speaking with some outward respect about Puri, the shrine of the Vaisnavas, the following lines of his show a covered joke and sneer which the poet flings at some of the customs prevailing in that place. 'Oh let us go to Puri. There we shall take the rice first offered to the god of the temple, and wipe away our hands on our heads, and sing and dance in joy.'[1] In the holy city of Puri, cooked rice is not held unclean, as in other parts of India, wiping the hand on the head after dinner, is a sneer at the custom of dispensing with washing which is indispensable elsewhere after a meal. The singing and dancing of the Vaisnavas in emotional felicity also forms a subject of the poet's ill-disguised humour.

পৃষ্ঠদেশে গ্রন্থ ঝোলে খান সাত আট।
ভেকা লোকে ভুলাইতে ভাল জানে ঠাট্॥
এক এক জনের ধূর্মাড়ি ছুটি ছুটি।
ছুই চক্ষু লাল গাঁজা ধুনিবার কুটি॥
ভুপলামি ভাবে ভাব জন্মে থেকে থেকে।
বীরভদ্র, অদ্বৈত বিষম ডেকে উঠে॥
সে রসে রসিক নবশাখ লোক যত।
উঠে ছুটে পড়ে পায় করে দণ্ডবত॥
সমাদরে কেহ নিয়া যায় নিজ বাড়ী।
ভালমতে সেবা চাই নড়ে তাড়াতাড়ি॥
গোষ্ঠশুদ্ধ খাড়া থাকে বাবাজীর কাছে।
মনে মনে ভয় অপবাদ হয় পাছে॥"

1 "চল যাই নীলাচলে।
খাইয়া প্রসাদ ভাত মাথায় মুছিব হাত
নাচিব গাহিব কুতুহলে॥"

Shiva's marriage.

The legend of Shiva's marriage and his quarrel with his consort about domestic matters, has, as I have already stated, supplied an inexhaustible source of mirth and humour to the people of the countryside. Old Shiva is delineated as a poor vagabond, who earns his livelihood by begging. His wife Parvati has to keep food ready for her sons, daughters and servants every day, but he cannot make adequate provision, hence there is a constant quarrel in the house. Shiva is not slow in teasing his young wife with pungent remarks. But when Parvati is really angry, Shiva is swept away before her anger like an old boat against a strong current. Bharat Chandra's sketch of old Shiva after he has sustained a rush from his young consort is humorous and interesting. Shiva in an unlucky moment made a remark that it was due to the luck of a wife that the husband became rich or poor. Such remarks are often made by husbands who are idle and unfit for any manly avocation, and depend upon charity and begging. Parvati's sharp and almost cruel retort made the position of Shiva very uncomfortable at home and he did not hazard a reply. The poet draws the following sketch of Shiva after this humiliation.

"Uma's bitter words, brought a sense of shame to Shiva. He was very hungry at the time. It was past noon, and the old fellow had not taken anything yet. His throat had become bitter with

gastric juice. An old man can bear all privations, but not hunger. Not daring to look up lest he should meet the eyes of Parvati, the Great God bent his head low and called Nandi to his presence. 'Bring my bag, Nandi,' ran his mandate. Forthwith I shall proceed to the streets for begging. Bring my horn, the string of bones which I put on my neck, bring also my tabor, forget not the tiger-skin. Last of all you should rub ashes on my person.'[1] The Indian ascetics wear tiger-skins, sound horns or tabors and cover their bodies with ashes. So there is nothing to comment upon the above but the humour of the passage lies in the beggar's command to his attendant to robe him in right royal fashion. This element of humour is very prominent in the original, however ill-preserved it may be in my English translation. There is anothor sketch of Shiva which is full of a quiet humour. It is when he has taken a profuse quantity of Bhang. His

[1] ভবানীর কটুভাষে, লজ্জা হৈল কৃত্তিবাসে
ক্ষুধানলে কলেবর দহে।
বেলা হৈল অতিরিক্ত পিত্তে হৈল গলা তিক্ত
বৃদ্ধ লোকে ক্ষুধা নাহি সহে॥
হেটমুখে পঞ্চানন নন্দীরে ডাকিয়া কন
আন ঝুলি যাইব ভিক্ষায়।
আন শিঙ্গা হাড়মাল ডুমুরু বাঘের ছাল
বিভূতি লেপিয়া দেহ গায়॥

eyelids are heavy and seem to close, though he wills it otherwise. He smiles and speaks broken words, such as 'Oh, N-a-n-dy, bring some dry things after the drink.'[1] The old god is presented to us in many pictures, sometimes as a beggar ridiculed by boys, sometimes as beating a safe retreat from the volley of his wife's abuse, sometimes as bridegroom, surrounded by maids who comment even in the first interview upon his gray hair and tiger-skin, sometimes as detected by Parvati while he makes improper love proposals to a Koch woman, sometimes as receiving food from the hands of his wife, and as a certificate of approval of the good quality of the dish dancing in joy in her presence and sounding her praises by his horn and sometimes as delirious with the drugs prepared by Nandi.

All these have many points of humour which at one time were much enjoyed by the Bengal villagers. They, however, do not really hold him up to ridicule, though they, no doubt, make his personality an enjoyable one. The pictures are often grand, sweet and sublime, as befitting the Great God, but we are not concerned with that feature of him to-day. When the maids of the bride's party, see the contrast at the time of

[1] খসিল বাঘের ছাল আলু থালু হাড়মাল
ভুলিল ডমরু শিঙ্গা পিনাক ত্রিশূল।
হাসি হাসি উত রোল আধ আধ আধ বোল
নন্থু নন্দি আ আ অন নকুল ॥

marriage, he, an old man bent down with age, and she, a lovely girl, a princess, just stepping into youth, they openly speak out their feelings which makes the situation of the bridegroom mournfully pathetic. The maids speak in one of the loveliest Bengali metres with an abrupt rise and fall of sound which seems to indicate the very spirit of the quarrelsomeness of garrulous tongues. They say, "Parvati's hair is fine as Chamaree, but look at the copper-wires on the head of the old fellow. Who will call them hair? Beautiful is the face of Parvati like the moon in full glory, but behold the beard of the old man, it is like a stick of raw jute. There the fine teeth of Parvati, they are beautiful as pearls, but the very wind seems to shake the old fellow's teeth that look like a rotten fence."[1]

Serio-comic.

We shall now pass on to another serio-comic picture introduced by Bharat Chandra in his character of the sage Vyasa.

The Sege Vyasa.

He is represented as a Brahmin scholar and ascetic, proud of his learning and wisdom, one who believes himself to be the defender of a religion and

1 " উমার কেশ চামর ছটা,
তামার শলা বুড়ার জটা।
উমার মুখ চাঁদের চূড়া,
বুড়ার দাড়ী শণের নুড়া।
আমার উমার দন্ত মুকুতা গঞ্জন,
বায়ে নড়ে ভাঙ্গা বেড়া বুড়ার দশন। "

vested with the right of reforming those who have acted in contravention of the spirit of the Sastras. 'His disciples,' says the poet, 'carry with them a load of manuscripts of the Vedas, Puranas, and other scriptures wherever he goes, and the sage delights in nothing so much as in humiliating his opponents by his great learning. If he stands up, his matted locks touch the ground. He is an orthodox Vaisnava and would not admit that other forms of religions have any grain of truth in them. All over his person are sacred marks in which the name of Visnu is inscribed. These look like so many tiger's claws to tear off the stag of sins, which prevail in this iron age of ours. What is his work? The poet enumerates them as follows. 'He is sure to present himself before others, whenever pious people distribute charity or practise some religious function or rites. How these rites are performed, in what manner worship is conducted, whether the sacrificial rites are duly celebrated, these are his constant look-out. He is the self-elected guardian of religion everywhere.'[1] The sage

[1] শিষ্যগণ পাঁজি পুথি বোঝা বোঝা লয়ে
নিগম আগম মত পুরাণ সহস্র যত
তর্কাতর্ক নানামত করে।
দাঁড়াইলে জটাভার চরণে লুটায় তার,
সর্ব্বাঙ্গে শোভিছে ছাবা, কলিমৃগ বাঘ থাবা,

happened to visit Naimisaranya one day, there he found many sages who were chiefly Shivaits. He found them engaged in worshipping the Great God and collecting Bel-leaves in which that god delights. The sages, he also found, making that peculiar sound, 'Byom' 'Byom,' by striking their cheeks with their fingers, as is usual with the Shivaits. Vyasa forthwith appeared in their midst and quoted Sastric texts to prove that Shiva-worship was of no good and that they should give it up and agree to Visnu-worship. These sages were not so easily to be dissuaded from their course, which they had followed from childhood, but not daring to assail the great scholar then and there, they simply said that it would be well for him to preach the Visnu-cult and attack Saivaism at Benares, the centre of the latter creed. Vyasa accepted the challenge and proceeded towards Benares. The sages of Naimisaranya, headed by Sounaka, followed him, simply to see the fun of the whole thing. Then followed a complicated scene. Vyasa and his numerous followers, with sacred marks belonging to Visnu-worship, all over their bodies, with the

Attacks on Saivaism.

কে কোথা কি করে দান কে কোথা কি করে ধ্যান
পূজা করে কেবা কিবা দিয়া।
কে কোথা কি মন্ত্র লয় কোথা কোন যজ্ঞ হয়
আগে ভাগে উত্তরেন গিয়া॥"

Tulsi leaves and Champaka flowers, which please that deity most, sang in the city of Shiva, the praises of Visnu, which seemed to drown as it were, the 'Hara' 'Hara' 'Byom' 'Byom' sounds that constantly rose there from the temples of the Shivaits. Saunaka and other sages collected Bel-leaves and rosary beads, as Vyasa and his party sought Gunja fruit and Tulsi leaves.

Shiva, the Great God, simply watched Vyasa's procedure with toleration and a quiet self-control. Vyasa began with Kirtan and hymns of Visnu at Benares, but not stopping there, commenced to abuse Shiva. 'Shiva and other gods,' he declared, 'can give one material prosperity but emancipation of the soul can be attained only by one's devotion to Visnu alone.' Then Shiva was wroth. At his hint Nandi, his servant, cast his angry look on Vyasa. This caused a complete paralysis of Vyasa's limbs. He lay inert like a thing of clay, losing the power of speech and motion. Visnu, the deity he worshipped, took compassion on him and appearing before him reproached him for making such an invidious attack on Shiva. 'We gods, are all one. There is no difference between one and the other. We manifest each in our own spheres, powers of the Supreme in ways peculiar to ourselves. Be remorseful and sing praises of Shiva. This will cure your malady.' Vyasa's eyes were full of tears but he

The punishment.

showed by signs that he had lost his voice. How could he sing Shiva's praise? Visnu touched the devotee's throat in his mercy and his voice was restored. The humour of the description does not end here.

Vyas's conversion into Saiva faith.

Vyasa sang the glories of Shiva and of his city of Benares. Thus the great Purana Kashi Khanda was produced. Nandi, Shiva's attendant, was pleased. By the boon granted by him, Vyasa's malady was completely cured.

Vyasa went from one extreme to the other, he turned a Shivite. The sacred marks on his forehead, belonging to the Order of Vaisnavas, he forthwith wiped away, and in their place wore the mark of the crescent moon, the symbol of the Shivites. The long garlands of Tulsi leaves, sacred to the worshippers of Visnu, that had adorned his breast, he tore away in great rage, and in their place wore the rosary beads. He gave up praising Visnu and began to sing songs of Shiva.[1]

[1] মুছিয়া ফেলিল
হরি মন্দির তিলকে।
অর্দ্ধ চন্দ্র ফোটা কৈল
কপাল ফলকে ॥
ছিঁড়িলা তুলসী কণ্ঠী
গুঞ্জা মালা যত।
পরিল রুদ্রাক্ষ মালা
শিব অনুগত ॥

Vyasa, the sage, said in a firm tone, 'Whatever may befall me, no matter, I will no more sing the praises of Visnu.'

Shiva, the great god, watched all this with interest, and smiling said to Nandi, 'Look, here Nandi, he was an orthodox Vaisnava and the mad fellow has now become an out-an-out Shaiva. See, how he treats the poor sacred Tulsi leaves and with what eagerness he goes to and fro, mad after collecting the *Bel*-leaves. The sacred Salgram stone, he has thrown away in a rage. But this I cannot tolerate. One who wears the signs sacred both to the Vaisnavas and Shivites, is entitled to our merciful consideration. We are but one. Visnu and Shiva are not two. He that tries to please the one, by abusing the other, should not be allowed to live in this holy city of mine. But I am not going to turn him out now I only order that no present be made by any one to Vyasa or his followers in this city.'

The sages, it should be stated here, lived on gifts made by the people. On that day his followers went as usual to the houses of the citizens for food. They all respectfully brought

ফেলিয়া তুলসী পত্র
বিল্বপত্র লয়ে ॥
ছাড়িলা হরির নাম
হরগুণ ক'য়ে ॥

plates full of food for such a great sage as Vyasa, but everywhere the food mysteriously disappeared from the plates by the will of the Great God. The venerable sage concluded that this was but a trick of the citizens and quarrelled with them. The dogs barked at him and the children clapped their hands. The great scholar and sage was at his wit's end. He and his followers were tired of their attempts to get food, but for the whole day they could not secure anything, so they fasted that day. The next day he stayed at home, but his followers went as usual in quest of food. On that day too no food could be had. Then Vyasa was wrath and cursed the people of Benares in the following manner :

Presents to Vyasa and his followers forbidden in Benares.

'Ye citizens, puffed up with pride, are confident that you are free from sin, living in this holy city. I curse you to-day, which will be fulfilled if the Vedas are true. True, if you commit any sin elsewhere, that sin will be removed by your visiting Benares, but from to-day, if you commit any sin in the city, it will not be in the power of even Shiva to remove it. For three generations together, you will not be able to acquire learning or wealth or spiritual bliss.'[1]

[1] ক্রমে তিন পুরুষের।
ধন না থাকিবে।
ক্রমে তিন পুরুষের
বিদ্যা না হইবে॥

After cursing the citizens in this way, Vyasa again went in quest of food. But as on the previous days, he met with disappointment everywhere. He threw away his begging bowl in disgust and returned home.

Parvati, Shiva's consort, saw the deplorable condition of Vyasa and his followers and took compassion on them. To her, whoever dwelt in the city, was alike. She had spite for none and she could not bear the sight of starvation or famine. Within the holy city, none should remain without food. So she assumed the guise of a fair woman, and coming to Vyasa, requested him to dine at her house with his followers. To Vyasa the invitation was a god-send, and forthwith he went to the house of the fair woman with his disciples. They were sumptuously fed, but after wishing all good to the hostess, whom he did not recognise to be Parvati, he was about to depart, when he met an old man at the door. The hostess told him that he was her husband. This old man was Shiva himself in disguise.

Parvati's mercy.

The old man said, 'Will you, sage, wait a minute to answer a few questions of mine?' Vyasa took his seat to listen to the old man's queries. He said, 'You are a reputed scholar, will you tell me how an ascetic should behave? What should he do in order to attain spiritual

emancipation ?'[1] Vyasa assumed a dignified air and began to speak like an enthusiastic preacher. He said, 'Look here, old man, the ascetic life is hard to follow. An ascetic must look upon every created being in the spirit of cosmopolitan love. He must train his mind to look upon loss and gain in the same light. Praise and abuse unto him are alike, a clod of earth and a diamond are of the same value.'[2] This and many more things of supreme wisdom he preached. The old man interrupted and said, 'But, sir, which of the great virtues you speak of, do you possess ? You profess to be an ascetic. The lessons of kindness and forbearance that you preach you have best

[1] বুড়াটি কহেন ব্যাস
তুমি ত পণ্ডিত।
কিঞ্চিত জিজ্ঞাসা করি
কহিবে উচিত ॥
তপস্বী কাহারে বলে
কিবা ধর্ম্ম তার।
কি কর্ম্ম করিলে পাব
পরলোকে পার ॥

[2] শুন বৃদ্ধ ব্রাহ্মণ
কহেন বেদব্যাস
তপস্তার নানা ধর্ম্ম
প্রধান সন্ন্যাস ॥
সর্ব্বজীবে সম ভাব
হার জয় তুল্য।
স্তুতি নিন্দা মৃত্তিকা
মাণিক্য তুল্য মূল্য ॥

illustrated by cursing my holy city.'[1] As he said this, he threw off his mask and showed himself in his real guise. His matted locks, his tall majestic figure like the mount Sumeru or Himalaya, the stream of the Ganges that flowed from his hair, all proclaimed to Vyasa the magnificent presence of the God of gods. With his spear he was about to kill the sage, but by the intercession of his queen and consort, Parvati, he was prevented from doing so. But immediately the mandate was passed that the ascetic with his followers should at once leave the holy city.

Shiva's anger and Vyasa expelled from Benares.

Driven from Benares, Vyasa felt greatly humiliated. He, the compiler of the eighteen Puranas, the greatest scholar and sage living in the world, was disgraced being turned away from the city like a street beggar. This was unbearable. "The drug-eating god has done me this wrong: I will retaliate upon him. Here in this open pastoral field I will build a second Benares. It shall be made holier

শুনিয়া বুড়াটি কন
সক্রোধ হইয়া।
আপনি ইহার আছ
কোন ধর্ম্ম লৈয়া॥
দয়া ক্ষমা আদি করি
জপ তপ ক্রিয়া।
জানাইয়াছ ভাল
কাশীতে শাপ দিয়া॥

than Shiva's city. By austerities and penance will I invest my city with such virtues that its inhabitants will attain spiritual emancipation without any effort whatsoever. The name of the city will be the Benares of Vyasa. In this way will I immortalise myself and do good to the people at the same time."

Building up of a second Benares.

"The Ganges should be brought near the new city, I am going to build. For the Ganges alone can purge the mortal soul of all sin." So he sat with closed eyes and invoked the goddess presiding over the sacred river. The invocation of the sage was irresistible. The goddess appeared and Vyasa said, "You have no doubt heard of my great disgrace at the hands of that drug-eating villain, the god Shiva. Ghosts are his companions, and a bullock on whom he rides is his sole property. He adorns his breast with a garland of skulls and bones. It is because you favour him by allowing your stream to pass through his matted locks that the unsightly god prospers in heaven. Your holy waters are the means to save men from sin. I have planned to build a second Benares. Will you not kindly allow your streams to flow past my city and grant me the boon that my city may have a saving power, better than Shiva's city?"

The Ganges invoked.

"Mad have you become," said the goddess of the holy river, "You abuse the Great God, who not only killed Tripura, Andhaka and other oppressors of heaven without any effort whatever, but killed Kama (desire) at the twinkling of his eyes. The Earth herself serves him as his chariot, the sun and the moon are his vehicles, the god Visnu himself is the spear with which he operates destruction. Foolish sage, you want to cope with the Great God. You want to build a second Benares. Shiva's city rests upon his spear, the vices of the earth cannot touch it. The city seems to be in the earth, but that is just like a drop of water on the lotus-leaf, it rests on it without being attached to it. If you want to be on the safeside, don't quarrel with the Great God. It is ridiculous on your part to attempt to measure your lance with Him. Go and apologise to Him, and give up the idea of this unequal and foolish rivalry."

Vyasa was angry at the words of the Ganges and abused her in a filthy language,[1]

[1] "আমি যারে প্রকাশিনু'
আমি যারে বাড়াইনু'
সেই মোরে তুচ্ছ করি কহে।
মাতঙ্গ পড়িলে দরে
পতঙ্গ প্রহার করে
এই দুঃখ পরাণে না সহে॥
স্বভাবতঃ নীচগতি
সতত চঞ্চল মতি—" etc.

attacking her character, her lineage and manners. The sage said, "Such a bad woman as you are whose past record is grossly wicked, would not have been revered as a goddess with power to save the sinner, had I not eulogised you and given you a high place in my Puranas. You are an ungrateful wretch to treat me in this way, your benefactor. You speak lightly of my powers. Know that if I curse you, your waters will dry up in a moment." The river-goddess's retort was equally severe. She said, "Foolish Brahmin, you know that I can save even the murderer of a Brahmin, I care not a jot for your curse." With the garrulity of woman's tongue, she abused him in her turn, not sparing his character and lineage, and then disappeared throwing the humiliated scholar into a paroxism of rage and disappointment.

Then did Vyasa invoke the heavenly architect Visvakarmá. He had built the city of Shiva, and Vyasa wanted him to build another Benares for him. The sage held out the promise to him that if he succeeded in building a city fairer than that of Shiva, he would reward him by elevating him to the rank of a god. For if he would write a Purana to celebrate the glory of Visvakarmá, the architect would be raised to the dignity of a god. Visvakarmá replied that he did not

Visvakarmā's non-compliance with Vyas's request.

wish for that honour, he was a poor architect and he could not venture to rouse the ire of the Great God by carrying out the orders of Vyasa; he did not say anything by way of dispargement, but pleaded his inability to have any share in the quarrel between the Great God and the great sage.

Disappointed Vyasa invoked Brahmá, the creator of the universe. His great humiliation and rage he could no longer suppress. Tears rolled down his cheeks and he cried, "Alas, alas, fie on my learning and wisdom." And when Brahmá came responded to his call, he wept like a child before him and related the story as to how he was turned out of the city of Benares by the attendants of Shiva, how they refused him and his followers presents, which made them fast for three days. Brahmá took compassion on him and showed sympathy which had a healing effect on his bruised heart. But when re-

Brahmā is afraid of Shiva.

quested by him to help him in building a second Benares, the Creator said "I had five heads. Once I incurred the displeasure of Shiva and he looked at one of my heads with such a spiteful glare of his third eye, that it vanished in the air, and since then I have become the four-headed god that you see me now. How can I help you in your quarrel with Shiva? Be advised, my

son, sing the praises of Shiva from this spot on which you have taken your seat, and this place will turn a second Benares by the Great God's boon." Saying this Brahmá departed.

Then did Vyasa think in this strain: "When myself and my followers starved at Benares none helped us, neither Visnu nor any other god. It was Parvati, Shiva's consort, who fed us at that critical moment. They call her the mother of the universe, and this time I will see if She can be the mother of every human child, though he may be an erring child." So thinking he fasted and kept vigil passing through great austerities and invoked the presence of Parvati.

Parvati invoked.

Now at that moment Parvati was serving food to her husband, the Great God, her sons and daughters and to her servants. She was feeling immensely happy because her people expressed their high satisfaction at the quality of the meals prepared with her own hands. The delight of a devoted mother, of a loyal wife and of the mistress of a house shewed itself in her look like a bright light and she talked in a gay mood, with those who ate with her husband, and indulged in many pleasantries, commenting on the quality of each of her preparations. But suddenly her mood changed, a shadow fell upon her face, and a momentary emotion of vexation and displeasure

suffused her face. This could not escape the eyes of Shiva. He stopped eating and said, 'What is it that troubles thee, wife? How is it that I mark a momentary gloom on thy face?' Parvati said, 'Here you are taking food and we are all so happy, but there at some distance from Benares, Vyas has been fasting for days and nights and invoking my aid for building a second Benares, which will be a better place than your city, my husband.'

Shiva said, 'They call you the merciful Mother of the Universe, and I am afraid, if a child is in distress, you will think lightly of all nuptial claims.'

Parvati—'Wretched fellow, he wants to overthrow my husband's capital with my help. Weak is the mother that does tolerate the wickedness of a child. This foolish sage will be caught in his own snare.' 'But his invocation is irresistible and I must go to meet him at once.'

Parvati in disguise.

Then did Parvati turn herself into an old woman bending under the burden of four score years. She had wrinkles all over her face and her hair had turned grey and knotted. She carried in one hand a basket and in another a staff. She had a hump on her back, and owing to rheumatic pain, her joints were all swollen. She was stone-deaf, so that one had to cry oneself hoarse to make her understand what one said. Her cloth

was torn, and she walked a few paces and then sat to take rest and then proceeded again. In this guise, who could recognise her to be the beautiful goddess—the mistress of the heaven of Shiva ?

With slow steps and with the help of her staff she approached the sage Vyas, for it was the invocation of the latter that she could not resist, though a goddess she was. She threw her staff on the ground and sitting near the sage made this query, 'Are you the sage Vyasa ? I hear that you are bent on building a second Benares. Will you tell me if that will be a better abode than the already existing one ? If its promises of the hereafter are better, I propose to stay and die here, so that, though my life on this earth has not been a happy one, dying I may attain bliss in a future life.'

Vyas curses his own city.

Vyasa was right glad that at least one soul was drawn by the prospects of the sanctity of the city he had proposed to build. Eloquently did he speak to her of the holiness of his shrine, of its saving power, 'Stay here, old woman, here you will find the portals of heaven open for you.' But the woman seemed to understand only that portion of his speech in which he called her an 'Old woman' and seemed to take umbrage at such an address. She left him and

with the help of her staff retraced a few steps and coughed for some time. Then she turned back, came to the sage who had sat again in deep meditation applying his soul's might to invoking Parvati. Powerless to move forward, the woman came back to Vyasa and addressing him affectionately said, 'My memory is so dull, O son, I do not recollect what you but just now told me. What is the virtue of this spot, this shrine that you have built? What prospects does it open to mortals, tell me again.' Vyasa said, 'If any one dies here, he will be entitled to immediate *moksha* (salvation) and pass on to heaven, everlastingly free from the cycles of birth and death.' The old woman seemed to understand him fully this time, and thanking him for the information, proceeded homeward, but being drawn back by the force of Vyasa's meditation, came back and made the same query, pleading deafness and loss of memory for troubling him again. Not once or twice, but four or five times did she tax the patience of the sage in this way. till the latter lost his temper and the last time she returned to him with the same question regarding the virtue of the shrine, he brought his face close to the ears of the woman and hoarsely cried out, 'Old hag, know it for certain that if any one dies in this spot, that person will turn an ass in the next life.' Then Vyasa as he had finished his speech, found the old woman

at once changed into the majestic form of youthful womanhood, that belonged to Parvati, saying with a gentle wave of her hand, 'Even be it as you have said.'[1] Granting him the boon, which he had himself uttered, Parvati disappeared, and Vyasa with his mouth gaping wide in surprise and bitter disappointment, thought for a while of the fate of the shrine, which he was going to build. He dared not stay there for long, lest if he died there he might turn into an ass in his next life. Forthwith he fled from the place, which since then has been known as Vyasa's Benares. No Hindu will go there and stay for any length of time, for they believe that if one dies there, his inevitable fate will be to be born an ass in his next life.

Thus ended the quarrel between the great god and his misguided opponent Vyasa. Parvati felt compassion for the latter and granted him this boon that though forbidden by Shiva to enter the holy city of Benares, once in a year on a day specified by her, he and his followers would be allowed to enter the shrine and bathe in the Ganges from the Manikarnika Ghat.

[1] ডাকিয়া কহিলা ক্রোধে কাণের কুহরে।
গর্দ্দভ হইবে বুড়ি এখানে যে মরে॥
বুঝিনু বুঝিনু বলি করে ঢাকি কাণ।
তথাস্তু বলিয়া দেবী হৈলা অন্তর্ধান॥

Emperor Jehangir and Bhavananda.

We have another sparkling piece of humour in Bharat Chandra's account of the Emperor Jehangir's dispute with Bhabananda as regards the superiority claimed by each for his own religion over that of the other. The Emperor attacked not only the religion of the Hindus, but also their customs and manners, and though Bhabananda, the champion of Hinduism, spoke before a great Emperor, whose displeasure could put an end to his existence on the spot, the Brahmin held his ground with unswerving tenacity. He could not use the force and careless ness, which characterised the Emperor's speech for obvious reasons of personal safety, but his words were by far wittier and cut his powerful opponent with the thin end of his arguments which flashed brightly like a sword. We refer our readers to the last chapter of the Annadamangal.[1] Last though not least is Bharat Chandra's very humorous picture of the quarrel between the two co-wives of Bhabananda Mazumdar. The jealousies of the first and the second queen were fanned by their respective maid servants,

[1] দেবী ভাবি হিন্দুরা সিন্দূর দেয় গাছে ॥
গোসাই মর্দ্দের মুখ হাত বুলাইয়া।
আপনার নুর দিল দাড়ী গোঁফ দিয়া ॥
হেন দাড়ী বামুন্ মুড়ায় কি বিচারে।
কি বুঝিয়া দাড়ী গোঁফ গোসাঞি দিল তারে ॥
আর দেখ নারীর খসম মরি যায়।

Shadhi and Madhi. And Bhabananda was really placed on the horns of a dilemma as to which of the queens' compartments he should visit first after his long sojourn in a distant country. The pitiable picture of the tongue-tied husband before two glib, jealousy-inspired, garrulous figures,

নিকা নাহি দিয়া রাঁড় করি রাখে তায় ॥
মাটী কাঠ পাথরের গড়িয়া মুরুত ।
জীউ দান দিয়া পূজে নানামত ভূত ॥
আদমিতে বানাইয়া জীউ দেয় যারে ।
ভাব দেখি সে তারে কি তরিবারে পারে ॥
বিশেষ বামুন জাতি বড় দাগাদার ।
আপনারা এক জপে আরে বলে আর ॥
দেবী বলে দেয় গাছগোড়ায় সিন্দূর ।
হায় হায় আখেরে কি হইবে হিন্দুর ॥
মজুমদার কহে জাহাপানা সেলামত ।
দেবতার নিন্দা কেন কর হজরত ॥
মাটি কাট পাথর প্রভৃতি চরাচর ।
পুরাণে কোরাণে দেখ সকলই ঈশ্বর ॥
তাহার মুরতি গড়ি পূজা করে যেই ।
নিরাকার ঈশ্বর সাকার দেখে সেই ॥
সাকার না ভাবিয়া যে ভাবে নিরাকার ।
সোণা ফেলি কেবল আঁচলে গের তার ॥
হিন্দু মুসলমান আদি জীব জন্তু যত ।
ঈশ্বর সবার এক নহে দুই মত ॥
পুরাণের মত ছাড়া কোরাণে কি আছে ।
ভাবি দেখ আগে হিন্দু মুসলমান পাছে ॥
ঈশ্বরের নুর বলি দাড়ির যতন ।
টিকি কাটি নেড়া মাথা এ যুক্তি কেমন ॥
কর্ণ বেধে যদি হয় হিন্দু গুণাগার ।
সুন্নতের গুণা তবে কত গুণ তার ॥
শূন্য ঘরে নামাজ কি কাজ তাহে আছে ।

none of whose demands he could fully satisfy for fear of offending the other, makes the whole scene comic, verging on the pathetic.

As all the poems of old Bengali Literature used to be sung generally before illiterate masses comprising chiefly the women-folk of country-side, an element of coarseness in humour, as I have already stated, was inevitable. For subtle and fine sayings would escape the audience. It should be stated here that the higher classes of people revelled in Sanskrit literature and, later on, in Arabic and Persian introduced by the Moslem rulers. This literature of ours sprang from the country and its audience were mostly illiterate. They had very few of them any knowledge of the alphabet, but when singers sang with acting, every line, nay every word, made an impression on them; and what is surprising, they became accustomed to the phraseology of Sanskrit metaphors. The uneducated people had acquired a high degree of linguistic culture so that without knowing the alphabet they could relish and appreciate many high things, particularly those of the spiritual philosophy embodied in the Vedanta. The classical metaphors and similies were always couched in high-flown Sanskritic words. These presented to them no difficulty whatever. What could be more wonderful or curious than the fact that those who could not sign their names, were able to

understand such words as মনসিজ, নীলোৎপল, যুগ্ম-নেত্র, মুখরুচি, অগ্নি, অংশু, পাংশু, আজানুলম্বিত and lots of words, which only Sanskrit scholars could be supposed to know. But with all their culture in the phraseology of Sanskrit, the jokes they would appreciate were often coarse, flat and even vulgar. Thus Vanshivadan, the poet of the 16th century whose poem on Manasa Devi is justly admired for its elegance and intrinsic poetic merits, gives us scenes of humour, which apparently have something of a coarse and grotesque nature. Such humorous writings we find more or less in all early poems. They were indispensable. For songs on the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Chandi and Manasa-cults were sung generally in the night time, one whole song called a *pala* generally took one night. The audience used to sit on a large carpet in wintry nights and hear these for seven or eight hours. The rainy season was not the fit time for these performances. For often the audience were two or three thousands in number and the singer had to hold his performance in large compounds, shaded over by a canopy which could ill protect the gathering from rain. To listen to long discourses for such a length of time would be tedious, if these were not enlivened by humour and jokes. The children and women wanted them for keeping up their interest in the songs,—the former particularly, for they would often fall asleep.

They were roused from sleep and took a renewed interest, when bursts of laughter came out from the great multitude in appreciation of the witty sayings, however coarse they might be. I have indicated the class of people who formed the majority of the audience and now let me introduce a passage of humorous writing of Vanshivadan from his poem on Manasa Devi. Vanshivadan flourished in the middle of the 16th century and was a native of the Mymensingh district. Last year I dwelt upon the high merits of the poems of his gifted daughter Chandravati, whose melancholy death from disappointed love, forms a subject of tragic interest, but we are not concerned to-day with the tale of the poetess.

Chandradhar's visit to Sinhal and an account of the Ceylonese.

Vanshivadan describes Chandradhar, the princely merchant, visiting Sinhal. This Sinhal or Ceylon was one of the most familiar places which Hindu merchants visited even after the Mohammudan conquest of Bengal. But gradually all historical knowlege of the island and of its people passed away yielding to traditions in which truth and fable were strangely mingled. So in the 16th century, when sea-voyage was prohibited by the Brahmins, all kinds of stories sprang up and developed into folk-tales, having hardly any kinship with history. Ceylon was thus enshrouded by superstitious

ideas in the popular estimation, and some of these ideas (it is a curious fact in these days of railway-communication), prevail even up to this time. Mr. Dharmapal, the distinguished Ceylonese preacher of Buddhism, told us in one of his recent speeches, delivered at a meeting of the Buddhist Dharmankura Sava, that when he first came to a certain place in Eastern India, hundreds of people gathered to see him, believing that a Rakshasa, a follower of Bibhisan, had come from Lanka. When even in these days of enlightenment and culture, such ideas are possible in this country, we cannot blame the poet Vanshivadan for attributing to the Ceylonese, manners and customs, some of which are false and imaginary.

The poet says that the Ceylonese people had strange laws in their country, the son did not inherit the property but the nephew, sister's son did. This of course is not at all true in regard to the Ceylonese people. You all know what it is still the custom with the Nayar Brahmins of the province of Madras. The descriptions of the people remind us of the Kankanadi Brahmins, who, some historians say, were not originally the natives of this country, but were Europeans who having been ship-wrecked in the Malavar coasts, settled in the Deccan. Their eyes, the poet says, were red, so were their ears and noses. They were tall and their hair was brownish ; not

knowing the use of betel, their teeth shewed a mixture of grey and white like the old bones of a cow. Though the account has an element of the grotesque in it, it may be taken to be a sketch of a European represented in the কঙ্কনাদি Brahmin, who according to legends was admitted to Brahmanic caste by Parusa Ram. The poet says that if the parents died they did not immediately burn them. They tried to preserve them by artificial means from decay and rotting. This seems to refer to the custom of the Buddhists of preserving the corpses of their people for a long time before cremation. Hints are also given suggesting that polyandry existed among the people. The poet does not certainly draw the Ceylonese in his true character, he takes the opportunity of attributing all tales that he heard of the manners, customs and appearance of the people of the Deccan to the Ceylonese, and makes a confused mess of the whole thing.

Another peculiarity in the manners of the Ceylonese people that the poet notices is the custom of the wives of saluting their husbands with proper respect. There is nothing strange in such conduct of women, for the husband, according to the Sastras, is perfectly entitled to every respect from the wife. Yet from the way in which this is spoken of the Ceylonese people, it appears that in Bengal this practise was

laughed at, wives and husbands being reckoned as standing on an equal footing there, whatever the injunctions of the scriptures might have been. The wife in this province was not in the habit of making obeisance to her husband every morning as if he was her superior. I know that in some parts of Eastern Bengal it was the custom for the wife to salute her husband every morning. But this was ridiculed by the people of the other parts of that province. The poet also mentions that there was a free mixing of men and women in Ceylon. The maternal uncle of a husband will on no account be allowed to see the face of his wife ; there are other restrictions of this sort in many parts of India, with which we are all familiar. These customs are now more or less dying out. The poet regrets that in Ceylon no such restriction is observed. The superiors dance and sing in the company of those ladies, whom the former are not even allowed to see or touch in Bengal.[1] There are many coarse and vulgar references to the manners of the Ceylonese people which no doubt made the Bengal masses laugh, though they are not fit to find a place in decent literature.

1 মা বাপ মৈলে তারা রাখে শুকাইয়া।
মৈলে পুত্র কিছু নয় ভাগিনেয় অধিকারী ॥
ভাগিনাবধূ গীত গায় মামা-শ্বশুর নাচে ।
জামাই পাখোয়াজ বাজায় শ্বাশুরীর কাছে ॥
দাসীর পদে দণ্ডবৎ পড়িয়া ভূমিত ।

But considering that all these belonged to the early part of the 16th century, we must excuse them, as in the literature of every country of that age that we know of, a coarse element in humour was the prevailing characteristic.

Now to return to the story of Vanshivadan. The merchant prince Chandradhar was dressed in white, and a large and bright white umbrella fringed with small pendants of pearls and stones was held over his head by his attendants. Two attendants, one on each side, fanned him with *chamara*, the butt-ends of which showed artistic designs. The scent of the perfumes, which the merchant used, diffused itself in the atmosphere, and the Ceylonese people looked admiringly at the newcomer, whom they all took to be a great Raja. But not so the Ceylonese king, who thought that the stranger might have an ulterior object of seizing his kingdom. He was a coward, but like all cowards he was a boaster and wanted to strike terror into the heart of his supposed adversary by long speeches. When the merchant was granted an interview His Majesty asked him as to who he was. Chandradhar made obeisance to him and said that he was a merchant by calling and caste and sought permission to trade in Ceylon. The king nodded his head in doubt and said, 'If you are a merchant, why is an umbrella unfurled over your head in right royal fashion?' The merchant

humbly submitted that he was the greatest merchant of his province and as such he was privileged according to the laws of the country to have the use of a royal umbrella. His Majesty evidently doubted the truth of this statement and felt fear lurking in his mind. He further asked him questions as to how many soldiers he had brought with him, the strength of his navy etc., and then in order to terrorise him said with much enthusiasm, 'You see, I have a Kali-temple in the southern precincts of my city. No stranger, however powerful, can cope with me in arms. I am a Kshatriya king and you know that a Kshatriya's profession is war. Many a king have I vanquished in the field and sacrificed to that deity. I have never shrunk from war, and have always come out a victor, however hard the contest.' The merchant prince perceived the motive behind this animated speech, and though secretly smiling at the king's foolish fears, nevertheless dreaded that his suspicion might at any moment prove dangerous to him. So he changed the topic and enumerated the articles that he had brought there for trading purposes. He presented His Majesty with some sweet cocoanuts, with betel-leaves and betel-nuts which the Indians relish so much. His Majesty's face grew pale at the sight of the fruits and leaves. His councillors looked suggestively

The tasting of the cocoanut and betel-nuts.

at him and the king at once rose from his seat and said, 'No more, I shall not allow you, O stranger, to speak before the court, lest your wily tongue should lead us to danger. These big fruits appear to be poisonous and these small ones and the leaves and the white powder (lime), all these have been taken from some poisonous plants. These must be first put to test, before I allow you to speak here.' The merchant was going to say, 'Let me prove that these are delicious food by taking them myself in your Majesty's presence.' But the king said, 'Stop, I shall allow no such thing. You are acquainted with the process of removing the poison from them, as they are the products of your land. You should not speak. Le me put them to test by some of *my* men.' His Majesty glanced at his courtiers but all of them turned pale. The gate-keeper Giridhar was there. The king ordered him to take a bit from a cocoanut fruit. He looked stupefied at the royal command as if some body had thrown him down with great force from the sky to the earth. Fear seized his limbs which shook, and his tongue and throat became parched and dry. He cursed the wicked merchant, who for no fault of his, was the cause of his death which seemed near at hand. Tears fell from his eyes, as he prostrated himself before the king and said, 'I am your Majesty's devoted servant. I have served you all my life

loyally. Why do you sentence me to death for no fault? I have only one wife. She is not likely to mount my funeral pyre. You are a great king, many wives and mistresses would burn themselves dead with you, when you would die. That is a great consolation, but for my part, my journey to the next life will be all alone, and will not your Majesty feel pity for one whose cruel fate would be to be a solitary wayfarer in the path of the next world?'

But the order of the king had to be carried out and all remonstrance proved unavailing. A whole cocoanut fruit with its outer shell and skin, he took in his hand and trembled like a leaf in fear. It seemed that his breath was well-nigh out, but before he actually tasted the fruit, he addressed the courtiers present and said that for his death none was responsible but the vile merchant, whose coming to Ceylon produced such a disaster on him. Cursing him to his heart's content, he tried to bite the shell with its outer coating but they proved too strong for his teeth and gums which profusely bled. Seeing blood, coming from his mouth, Giridhar swooned in fear thinking that the poison had already begun to act. The king was fully convinced that the cocoanut fruit was poisonous. 'My stars be thanked,' he cried, 'that I have not partaken of it believing in the glib-tongued, wicked merchant.' Vanshivadan, the poet, here says in

the colophon, 'Yea king, you have had a narrow escape this time.'

Then the king had the betel leaves, lime and nuts presented by the merchant brought before him. The Police Inspector was ordered to taste these. He was struck with fear and seeing Giridhar lying unconscious in a nervous fit, he saw his own fate reflected as it were in a mirror. 'The gate-keeper is there,' cried he, 'suffering from the effect of the poison, I am doomed to death.' He addressed His Majesty with joint hands and said, 'Most humbly do I submit my poor case to your dreaded Majesty. If a man is a burglar or adulterer or commits incest, these poisonous leaves, powder and fruits ought to be prescribed for him as punishment. What have I done to deserve this death by poison? Other women here have more husbands than one, but I am the only husband of my poor wife. What will become of her, if I die here to-day?' The king said, 'No more of this, if you really die, I shall make one of my own people marry your widow by the Shanga system. So rest assured that your wife's life will be made comfortable in every way. You may now taste these presents from the merchant without any anxiety on the score of your wife.' The Police Inspector took some lime in his hand and putting it on a betel leaf first rubbed them on his body. He tried to ascertain whether these poisonous things

had any burning power, and then he put a quantity of lime in his mouth, the betel nuts he ate with the leaves. The result was that a disproportionately high quantity of lime burnt his mouth and an unusual quantity of betel-nuts made his head reel, as taken in an overdose, these have an intoxicating effect. He had already been in a state of severe nervous tension believing all these to be poisonous. When actually he felt a burning sensation on his tongue and his head reeled, he had no doubt that he was lost. Then his eyes were raised up like those of dying man, he gasped for breath and with a gaping mouth struggled for life, so that the king was alarmed and cried out, 'What are you looking at, Ye people? The Inspector dies, bring water and some antidote.' The king himself took in his hand a tumbler and began to pour water over his head.

I have briefly given a portion of this story in which attempts are made to produce a comic scene, and when the poem in which this episode is narrated, was sung before the masses, with acting and various gestures on the part of the Gyan or the chief ministrel, the auidence, we may well imagine, laughed to their hearts' content. There is not much refinement in the humour, every one will admit, but enough to make the country people laugh and enjoy it. The calculation of one's future prospects, before

they are realised and which merely panders to an idler's fancy, can have no better illustration than what we find in the story of Kalanemi, Ravan's uncle. Kirtivasa in the 15th century relates the story, the like of which is to be only found in Alanasker's day-dreams. In the Lanka Kanda, where Hanuman went to collect for the wounded Lakshana the medical herb, *vishalyakarani*, that had an infallible efficacy in healing mortal wounds, Ravan sent his uncle Kalanemi to frustrate the object of Hanuman by a clever device. Kalanemi was to disguise himself as an ascetic and request Hanuman to be his guest for a short time. The latter was to be asked to bathe in an adjacent tank, the abode of a terrible crocodile, which ate every living being that ventured to touch its water. The heavenly nymph Gandhakali had been cursed by the sage Daksha for a youthful freak, so that she had become a hideous crocodile. She was, however, to be restored to her original beautiful shape and to her place in heaven when the ape-god Hanuman would destroy her crocodile form.

The division of Lankā by Kalanemi.

Kalanemi did as he had been bidden. On his way to the Gandhamadan hills, Hanuman was accosted by a venerable-looking ascetic, whose earnest entreaties to be allowed to show him hospitality, the ape-god could not resist. He went to bathe in the tank, shown him by the

sage, but as he descended the landing ghat, he was seized by the terrible crocodile of the tank. It took Hanuman some time to kill the animal, and the delay that occurred raised high hopes in the mind of the false ascetic. Kalanemi thought within himself, 'If Hanuman is killed by the ferocious crocodile, as most probably will be the case, Ravana is promise-bound to give me one half share of his kingdom. Now which portion of the empire of Lanka shall I take?' He became for a time lost in thought, not being able to decide the problem, then suddenly he came to a solution and resolved, 'With a rope in hand I will take the measurement of the whole land. In the south and north, I will allot a larger share to myself, but the west I will leave to Ravan. In the west there is the bridge, and who knows the gushing waves of the sea may make the bridge collapse any moment? Of this let Ravana take the risk.' Then he busied himself in calculating how much of gold and precious stones there were in the royal treasury. 'Surely I am entitled to half of this treasure also.' When he was lost in reveries of this sort, Lo! there stood before him in all his glorious majesty, the ape-god who had just killed the crocodile and discovered the wiliness of the false sage. Kalanemi was killed on the spot. Kalanemi's division of Lanka is a familiar story which is often referred to by the

country-people to mock at those who calculate profits before the achievement of success.

In the middle of the 19th century Bengali prose was rapidly developed under the influence of English education. Iswar Gupta became famous by his humorous sketches of Bengal social life, both in his poetical and prose writings. His witty sayings in epigrammatic sentences were at one time on every one's lips, though in the present time we cannot relish them, lacking as they do refinement and decency. Widow-remarriage was the burning question of the day, and the orthodox community bitterly opposed this measure proposed by the reformers. Iswar Gupta as the champion of the orthodox community, wrote, "They have all begun to whisper 'Trying to save young widows, let not the reformers show their merciful spirit towards our granddames. Their skin is wrinkled and hair all turned grey. What reformer will dare put shell-bracelets on their hands or make them renew the taste of fish?" The Hindu women when widowed give up fish and meat of all kinds and do not wear shell-bracelets. The last lines refer to this.

Iswara Chandra Gupta's satires.

About this time Dr. Carey reduced some of the old Bengali folk-tales to simple prose-form in Bengali; these are enlivened by a spirit of humour—at one time much enjoyed by

the country-people. I quote the following one.

"A husbandman went with his plough to the fields one day, and got 24 fish from a neighbouring canal. He came back to his home and after having made over the fish to his wife returned to his duties. His wife prepared a curry with the fish and wanting to know the taste of her preparation took a sip from it. She found that it tasted well, and then she thought, 'But I don't know how the fish tastes, let me eat one.' So she ate a fish and then she thought, 'But still I don't know how that one on the dish would taste' and she ate the second fish also. In this manner she proceeded till she had finished all but one, and when her husband came home, she presented him with a dish of rice and a single fish! The husbandman wonderingly said, 'What is the matter? I got 24 fish, what about the rest?' His wife gave him the following account of the fish.

The story of fisherman's wife.

'You brought 24 fish. A kite fell upon them and took away eight; sixteen remained.

'I took them to the tank to wash and eight swam away in the water; eight remained.

'I got two bundles of fuel in exchange of two fish.

'Your good neighbours ought to have a share.

'I presented them with four; and then only two remained.

'I ate one to see how it tastes; there remains one for your share.

'Look for that on the dish.

'If you are a true man eat the bone and keep the fish (for me).

'Because you have got such a wife as myself you are furnished with a true account.'[1]

[1] "এক কৃষক লাঙ্গল চষিতে গিয়া কোনখানে গোটা চব্বিশেক মৎস্য ধরিয়া গৃহে আনিয়া আপন গৃহিণীকে পাক করিতে দিয়া আপনি পুনর্ব্বার চষিতে গেল। তাহার গৃহিণী সে মৎস্য কয়টি পাক করিয়া মনে বিবেচনা করিল যে মৎস্য পাক করিলাম কিন্তু কি প্রকার হইয়াছে চাখিয়া দেখি। ইহা ভাবিয়া কিঞ্চিৎ ঝোল খাইয়া দেখিল যে ঝোল সুরস হইয়াছে, পরে পুনর্ব্বার ভাবিল মৎস্য কিরূপ হইয়াছে তাহাও চাখিয়া দেখি। ইহা ভাবিয়া একটা মৎস্য খাইল, পুনর্ব্বার চিন্তা করিল ওটি কিরূপ হইয়াছে তাহাও চাখিতে হয়, ভাবিয়া সেটিও খাইল, এরূপ খাইতে খাইতে একটি মাত্র অবশিষ্ট রহিল। পরে কৃষক ক্ষেত্র হইতে বাড়ীতে আইলে তাহার গৃহিণী সেই মৎস্যটি আর অন্ন তাহাকে দিলে কৃষক কহিল যে একি? চব্বিশটি মৎস্য আনিয়াছি, আর কি হইল? তখন তাহার স্ত্রী মৎস্যের হিসাব দিল।

মাছ আনিলা ছয় গণ্ডা, চিলে নিল দুইগণ্ডা
বাকী রইল ষোল।
তাহা হইতে আটটা জলে পলাইল।
তবে থাকিল আট, দুইটায় কিনিলাম দুই আটি কাঠ,
তবে থাকিল ছয়, প্রতিবাসীকে চারিটা দিতে হয়,
তবে থাকিল দুই, তার একটা চাখিয়া দেখিলাম মুই,
তবে থাকিল এক, ঐ পাত পানে চাহিয়া দেখ,
এখন হ'স যদি মানুষের পো, তবে
কাঁটাখান খাইয়া মাছখান থো,
আমি যেই মেয়ে, তেঁই হিসাব দিলাম কয়ে।

I shall here quote another Bengali folk-tale from Carey's celebrated work Itihás Mála or the Garland of Stories published from the Serampur Press in 1811. The following is a literal translation of the original Bengali text, by Dr. William Carey's great grandson S. Pearce Carey, M.A., given in his book "William Carey" (p. 125).

"Once a gander Rakta Chanchu came to a forest in Magadha, where lived a family of cranes.

'Whence have you come?' they asked.

'From a delightful stream in the South.'

'What attraction could it offer such as us?'

'Oh, the stream is sweet as nectar; the lotuses look like gold; the banks are bright with perpetual blooms; the steps of the ghats are brilliant with precious stone.'

'Any snails there?'

'No, no snails.'

At which they burst into derisive laughter."

The poem Kaminikumar in which an indecent love-story was related in the middle of the 18th century contains a few pages in simple prose. This is exceedingly humorous. A young merchant fell in love with a princess who admitted him into her harem in the guise of a maid servant. Kamini, the wife of the merchant, waited for a long time and despairing of his return, disguised herself as a merchant and arrived at the city of the king, whose

daughter had captivated the heart of her husband and kept him in concealment in her harem. Kamini got a clue to this love-affair and interviewed the king who was so pleased with her that taking her for a young merchant in whose guise she had appeared, offered her the hand of the princess. Kamini, the merchant's wife, readily agreed and after duly marrying the king's daughter, detected her intrigue with her husband and brought the matter to the notice of the king. The king pleaded for pardon for his daughter, but handed over the husband to the wife. The former did not know the latter to be his wife but taking her for the husband to the princess became a supplicant for mercy. Kamini took him in a boat, and her husband trembled like an aspen leaf. When she (in the disguise of the merchant) referred to his intrigue with the princess, the husband called her his God-father, his *mabap*, and begged for pardon in the most humiliating manner. The young merchant's name was Kumar, but Kamini would not call him by that name, as it was held sacrilegious in those days to call the husband by his name. She gave him the name of Ramballava and ordered him to prepare silims of tobacco for her. This the husband did, and as often as he approached her, believing her to be his master, Kamini enjoyed the situation, covertly smiling and whispering

Kamini Kumara.

some words of fun to her companion, Sona, who had also come with her, disguised as a male attendant. The whole situation is very humorous, as the husband not knowing his wife, carries out her least wishes, flatters her and does menial service to her, for fear of some severe punishment, which he suspects is inevitable. The fun was not altogether light and gay as the wife, amid all her jokes and merrymakings at the expense of her husband, did not for a moment pardon the husband who came for trade but intrigued with a princess dishonouring the sacredness of nuptial vow. There is thus a serio-comic interest in the description.

The Babu Bilas.

In 1823 Babu Pramatha Nath Sarma published a book called the Babu Vilasa in which the son of a rich man spoilt by indulgence and excesses, but afterwards reclaimed by true penitence and remorse for past folly has been depicted in a very interesting manner. The author writes in an unassuming style, but his work is undoubtedly a masterpiece of satire. The tale is told with a plain eloquence and the author conceals his art so successfully that there is no attempt at saying fine and witty things. He invests the story with sparkling humour from the beginning to the end. The Alaler Gharer Dulal and the Hutum Pechar Naksha are known as the earliest models of Bengali colloquial style, full of humour, but

the former in its subject matter and the latter in its style are mere imitations of the Babu Vilasa. We find Mr. Long praising the book in enthusiastic language in his catalogue of Bengali works. "New editions of the book are continually issuing from the press," writes Mr. Long and further "One of the ablest satires of the Calcutta Babu as he was thirty years ago." "It is a kind of Hogarth's Rake's Prayers." An elaborate review of the book appeared in the Quarterly Friend of India, 1826. I quote below an extract from the book at random.

"After a long search made for a Persian teacher for the young boys, Dhar, the officer of the Babu, at last succeeded in securing one from Jessore. The Babu said, "Listen to me, Munshi; you are to teach my boys Persian. You will put up in the outer apartments of my house. When my boys have occasion to go abroad, you should accompany them in their carriage. You will have free board and lodging besides a pay of Rs. 3 a month." The Munshi of Jessore heard the above and departed without saying anything. Then many a Munshi was called in from Natore, Faridpur, Sylhet, Dacca, Comilla, Backergunj and other places. For full two months this coming and going went on, but no selection could be made. The Babu was not pleased with their pronunciation and dismissed them all on that ground. Finally a sweet-

tongued Munshi of the Chittagong side was appointed. He produced a certificate, showing that he had worked as a boatman. We have already indicated the extent of the knowledge the Babu possessed in languages. He glanced at the certificate that was written in English and affecting a full knowledge of its contents said, 'Yes this certificate says that you worked for a long time as tutor of Persian, the reason why your services were dispensed with have also been stated in this certificate.' Then he looked at the teacher and asked, 'How long did you serve under this European gentleman?' The Munshi said, 'Why that is also written in the certificate. You may kindly read it again and see.' The Babu said, 'Yes, it is all right, it is written here. Under whom did you serve?' The boatman replied, 'Sir, I served under the Balabar Company.' The Babu was very much pleased to learn that he had been a servant in the office of a European company. The boatman was thus appointed to teach the boys Persian on the pay and conditions stated above.

After this there is a very humorous account of the young Babus, learning English, but we have no space to give further extracts from the Babu Vilasa. There is much wit in some of the stories written by Mrityunjaya Vidyalankar in his celebrated book the Provodha Chandrika

written in the year 1813. J. C. Marshman speaks of Mrityunjaya in his History of the Serampur Mission as " One of the most profound scholars of the age." It is interesting to see how with his huge learning he attempts to amuse his readers with humour. This reminds us of the attempts of the elephant to please Adam and Eve in the garden of Paradise :—

> " The unwieldy elephant,
> To make them mirth used all his might
> and wreathed
> His lithe proboscis "

In regard to Mrityunjaya, Marshman further observes that he "bore a strong resemblance to our great lexicographer (Johnson) not only by his stupendous acquirements and the soundness of his critical judgments but also by his rough features and unwieldy figure." It is really amusing to see this great scholar giving a humorous sketch of a Brahmin scholar who sells his cow in the market, telling his customers that it is a very old cow, thinking that people will take it to be an experienced animal and be eager to purchase it.

But perhaps it is in amorous topics that the genius of a Bengali humorist shows itself at its best. Five hundred years ago Chandidas showed in a conversation of Krisna with Radha's maids, who complain of his wicked indifference to her,

how fine words spoken with tender affection, may prove a dagger to the soul. The words are dignified but they carry the soul of wit in them; nothing indeed can be more charmingly witty than these attacks of the women of the Vrinda Groves on Krisna. In the earlier parts of the 19th century, Krisna Kamal Goswami enlivens his 'Divine Frenzy' (the Dibyan mad) with scenes in which Chandravali, goes to Muthra and delivers her message to Krisna. Her speech is obviously on the line of Chandidas. The spirit of Radha inspired by a deep sense of wrong prompts her words which cut Krisna to the quick. I shall close this lecture with an extract from the Divine Frenzy. The bond referred to in it, relates to the one executed by Krisna during his first enthusiasm of love, promising to be a life-long slave of Radha in order to be entitled to attentions from the princess.

Chandra and Krisnna.

The scene.—A room in the inner palace. Krisna seated on a throne.

Enters Chandra.

Krisna—My poor woman, you look so sad. What is your name. Where is your home and wherefore do you come to me?

Chandra—I once knew, but now remember not my name. Oh, where is my native village? That too I have forgotten. And also the name of my king—the mission that brings me to this palace—all—all I seem to have forgotten. Let me recall. No, my memory is so bad. But I am a poor woman and thou art a monarch. Trouble not yourself about me.

Krisna—So strange, my poor woman, that you have forgotten everything on coming to this palace. If one goes from one place to another, does one forget all about oneself?

Chandra—Yes, O king, this is but too true. The town of Muthra has surely some oblivious effect on one's memory, one forgets everything about one's former self by coming here.

Krisna—Let that pass. I will ask you one question. Why did you repeat the name of Radha? How could you know her?

Chandra—Thou must know, O king, that we are all worshippers of Radha.

Krisna—Very well, good woman, I am pleased with you. Ask some reward of me. What you seek will be yours.

Chandra—What gifts would Your Majesty want to offer me?

Krisna—Why, I can reward you with gold, silver and precious stones.

Chandra—People of the place where I live count not gold, silver or stones as precious at all.

The Tree of Plenty grows in my native place. There things, highly valued elsewhere, are obtained at the mere asking; we are not wont to seek wealth, save one very precious jewel of ours that is lost, and about this I have come to appeal to thee, O king.

Krisna—Say what it is.

Chandra—Our princess had purchased a precious jewel. She wore it on her bosom, and valued it above her life. A man from Kansa's court went one day and robbed her of it. The princess is almost mad with grief. She has sent me to thee that thou mayset help to bring the thief to justice.

Krisna—If the thief is in my kingdom and the article is proved to be yours, surely you will get it.

Chandra—We know not for certain, where the thief is now, but he was once caught and executed a bond that is with me. The maker of this bond is probably here. If I can find him out, what help may I expect from thee, O king?

Krisna—Forsooth, I shall extract the value of the loss from him even if I am bound to sell all his goods by public auction.

Chandra—But by selling his property, if the value be not secured, what then?

Krisna—Why? he shall be sent to prison.

Chandra—I pray, O king, for pardon that I have troubled thee so much. If the thief belongs to a royal house, what then?

Krisna—Mind it not, good woman, even if it be my own self, the Law of the country must take its course.

Chandra—One word more. From behind the door I saw thee shedding tears at the mention of Radha's name. Why, may I ask, why didst thou do so?

Krisna—'Tis very strange that you should question thus. Familiar your face seems to me. But I cannot distinctly recollect who you may be.

Chandra—Why shouldst thou know me now? That happy day is gone. Some charmer here, probably Kubza, may have thrown magic dust in thine eyes. It may be strange that thou knowest not us—poor women—once thy favourites. (*Here she produces the boud.*) My gracious sovereign, see here this bond. Canst thou tell whose signature this is?

The signature was of Krishna himself who had declared himself to be her slave for life and executed a bond to that effect!

SUPPLEMENT

THE KARCHA BY GOVINDADAS

A few Vaishnavas of the orthodox school have been, for a long time, trying to assail the authenticity of the famous Karchā or notes by Govinda Das,—a blacksmith by birth, who accompanied Chaitanya in his tour in the Deccan and faithfully recorded the incidents of the Master's journey from 1510 to 1512 A.D.

As the Karchā is free from miraculous tales, so common in other biographical works, accepted as standard authorities on Chaitanya's life,—being, as it is, a simple and unassuming record without much regard for orthodoxy or sectarian conventions,—a section of the Vaishnavas has been disposed to think that it is by no means a fitting sketch of the great apostle, whom they identify with Vishnu of the Hindu triad.

In some other biographies, Chaitanya has been described to have talked with Advaitāchāryya from his mother's womb. He has sometimes been represented as manifesting six arms, to prove that He, who had been Rama and Kṛshna in previous incarnations, came down as Chaitanya in the Kaliyuga. The two arms of each of the three incarnations, making a total of six, are said to have been shown by him to Vāsudeva Sārvabhaum at Puri. This sign of divinity, it is alleged, more than all his arguments and devotional fervour, overthrew the great scholar and turned him into his devoted follower. It is also related in some of the other biographies that when Jagai and Madhai, the two great ruffians, had assaulted Nityānanda, Chaitanya came to the rescue and cried for the

Sudarshan, the great disc of Vishnu, which came whirling in the air at his call and struck the villains with terror. It is also said of him that he sowed a seed of mango, and like a magician, made it in no time grow into a large tree, with ripe fruits hanging from its boughs, and that while touring in the north-western provinces of India, he made tigers and elephants dance and recite the name of Hari,—an incident which was witnessed by no less a personage than Baladev Bhattacharyya. In the Chaitanya Bhagavata he is represented to have assumed the form of a boar and terrorised Sribas. It is also said that he turned himself into a tiger and left the mark of his claws on the breast of the Kaji of Nadia. I do not propose to give here a full catalogue of these marvellous events, which, to use the poet's words, are " thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks in Vellombrosa " in those works on Chaitanya, accepted as his standard biographies. The orthodox Vaishnavas look upon the Karchā by Murari, Chaitanya Charitāmṛta by Kṛshnadās Kavirāj, Chaitanya Bhagavata by Vṛndāban Das and Chaitanya Mangal by Lochan Das almost in the same light as the Bible is regarded by the devout Christians, and the Lalita Vistāra by the orthodox Buddhists. That all these above-named works on Vaishnavism have great value and merits, no one will gainsay. In all my treatises on the subject, I have bestowed high encomiums on those authorities for the great merits of their respective works.

But Govinda Das, who was a constant companion of Chaitanya, at least for the two years that he toured in the Deccan, gives a version of the Master's career for this short period in a way, which fundamentally differs from the accounts given in some of the other biographies, his narrative containing none of the marvels attributed

to Chaitanya. In it there are many instances of reformation of great sinners, but these marvellous reformations were effected without any miraculous power, excepting the power of simple faith. He cries for no divine disc or *Sudarshan Chakra*, to overawe the ruffians, but his musical voice, ringing with praises of God, his tears and trances were the great charm with which he conquered even the most inveterate ruffians. Some of the orthodox Vaishnavas, accustomed to regard the Master as God, endowed with supernatural powers, seem to think that he has been deprived of his divine attributes in the simple narrative, being merely described as a man. But those, who do not labour under age-long conventions of orthodoxy, feel in these artless and vivid statements the very life-giving breath of the divine man of Nadia all the more.

Before I revert to the arguments advanced by some of the orthodox Vaishnavas to demolish the Karchā by Govinda Dās, I will give a brief account as to how the Karchā was recovered and published by Pundit Jaygopal Goswami of Santipur.

Fifty years ago, Pundit Kalidas Nath, whose original researches in the field of Vaishnava literature will always be gratefully remembered, handed over to Pundit Jaygopal Goswami, the veteran Vaishnava of Santipur and a direct descendant of Advaitāchāryya, the revered friend of Chaitanya and one of the three great Vaishnava apostles in Bengal, some old Bengali manuscripts, of which Govinda Das's Karchā was one.

Late Babu Matilal Ghose of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, stated in the *Visnupriya Patrika* in 1896 A.D. that he had seen a very old MS. of the Karchā with Pundit Joygopal Goswami, a fact latterly corroborated

by another writer in the *Nabyabharat Patrika* about that time. The manuscript was with our illustrious countryman late Babu Sisirkumar Ghose for some time; and as the Karchā was held in high admiration by all who saw it, it was taken by Dr. Sambhuchandra Mookerjee, Editor of '*Reis and Rayat*' for a perusal. A few pages of the MS. was somehow lost while in the custody of Dr. Mookerjee. Babu Sisirkumar Ghose used some materials from the Karchā in his celebrated work, the "Amiya Nimai Charit." But relying on memory, he gave a resumé of the narrative he had read in the lost pages and mentioned Govinda Das, as a Kāyastha. Babu Sisirkumar Ghose, who was himself a Kāyastha, was not accurate in this statement; his memory had evidently grown rusty when he wrote an account, given in those pages. The lost portion covers fifty pages of the printed edition of Govinda Das's Karchā, which runs over 227 pages. Pandit Jaygopal Goswami, after a laborious research, discovered another MS. of the Karchā in possession of late Harinath Goswami and recovered the matter of the lost pages therefrom. Thus the whole of the Karchā, as it now stands, was published by the learned Pandit from the Sanskrit Press Depository of Calcutta in Saka 1817 or 1895 A.D.

From the autobiographical account by Govinda Das, as we find it in the printed edition, we know that Govinda Das calls himself a blacksmith and mentions Syama Das to be his father, Madhabi, his mother, and Sashimukhi, his wife. As soon as the book was published, Babu Matilal Ghose wrote an article in the Vishnu Priya Partika (Kartic, 410 Gauranga Abda, 1896 A. D.), in which he said that the first fifty pages of the book were forged by Pandit Jaygopal, that

Govinda Das in the original MS. called himself a Kāyastha and could, by no means, be a blacksmith. Pundit Jaygopal, a most revered scholar and then verging on fourscore, called at my place almost in a crying condition, and refuted the allegation of forgery brought against him, referring particularly to some statements to which he had been unwittingly led to subscribe. I do not like to say here all that he stated, as these will be unpleasant. I shall only refer to the fact that he strongly protested against the charge, saying that no one could ever think that an old Brahmin scholar, as he was, whose occupation was to initiate his disciples into the mysteries of Vaishnava faith, could forge a document, as he was alleged to have done, especially as there was no earthly object which he might gain from such an act—a fact admitted by Mati Babu himself in his article.

Babu Matilal Ghose, however, in the article referred to, admitted the fact that the rest of the book (177 pages), that is, barring the first fifty pages, was genuine, as many members of his house had seen the old MS. themselves.

Curiously enough, a few years after this article was written, several MSS. of Jayananda's Chaitanya Mangal were brought to light and the book was published by the Sahitya Parishat. Some of the MSS. of Jayananda's Chaitanya Mangal, 200 to 250 years old, will be found in the Manuscript Department of the Calcutta University Library. In these MSS. as also in the Jayananda's Chaitanya Mangal published by the Sahitya Parishat, it is clearly mentioned that "the blacksmith Govinda" was a companion of Chaitanya when he became a Sannyasi. As soon as this evidence was discovered, the arguments of those who had chosen to call Govinda

a Kāyastha and declared the fifty pages to be forged, fell flat like walls of gewgaw, though, for a time, the adverse critics kept up a cry that Jayananda's Chaitanya Mangal was itself not genuine. But the old MSS. were there, and a crushing reply to the assailants, published in the Sahitya Parishat Patrika, silenced all who held a contrary opinion.

In the first edition of my 'Banga Bhasha O Sahitya,' referred to the objections and met them. Nobody challenged my arguments at that time; so in the subsequent editions of my history, I dropped that portion, thinking that there was no more any contention over the matter. For a period of 28 years the assailants were silent. But my great regard and admiration for Govinda Das's Karchā, expressed in all my Chaitanya-topics, seems to have roused their activities again. They seem determined not to recognise the claims of any book as authentic beyond the pale of those few biographies they have admitted as standard ones. I am told that a *Samiti* has been established with a view to purging the Vaishnava literature of all elements, which, according to orthodox Vaishnava opinion, may be found to be objectionable. The object of this *Samiti*, if such a one has been established, is, so far as I may judge, to frustrate all historical research in the field of Vaishnava literature and keep it open for the simple and credulous people, who have evidently been made to pay for the organisation.

Last year they held meetings all over Bengal to denounce Govinda Das's Karchā as a forged work. I am not an exponent of Vaishnava orthodoxy but a historian; this they seem to have forgotten. They cannot expect me to care much for orthodox Vaishnava conventions. They cannot find fault with me if I do

give credit to the statement made in their 'standard biographies' that Chaitanya held a theological discourse with Advaita from his mother's womb or made the divine disc of Vishnu appear in the sky or that the angels of the heaven descended at every stage to sing his praises.

While these men have been trying to prove that I am no friend of the creed of Chaitanya, Dr. Sylvain Levi, in his Foreword to my "Chaitanya and his Age," referred to "my fanatic love for Chaitanya." *The Pioneer* while praising in high terms my humble services in the field of Bengali Literature, found fault with my extolling Chaitanya beyond all measure. I have also been condemned by the old historian Mr. Beveridge in his article, published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (January, 1912) for the very same reason.

It is, therefore, curious that some of my own countrymen should entertain an opinion that I have been harming the cause of Vaishnava religion by my publications. I take the liberty of quoting an extract from an article by Mr. Underwood, published in the Calcutta Review, January, 1919, when the paper was edited by Dr. Urquhart, to show that there are people who hold a contrary opinion. "In 1907 appeared the second edition of the Lord Gauranga by that fervid Vaishnava Shishirkumar Ghose. The work purported to be a biography of Chaitanya, but for historical and scientific purposes, it was almost useless, ...But the situation has greatly changed since Rai Saheb Dineshchandra Sen began to publish his patient and scholarly researches into the history of Bengali Literature. The work of his painstaking labours was immediately recognised in the West by such well-known Orientalists as Barth and Senart,

Rhys Davids, Grierson, Barnett, Kern and Oldenberg. The publication of this book did much to set in a clearer light the importance of a thorough acquaintance with this Vernacular literature of India for any true appreciation of her religious life .... Though the Rai Saheb is not himself a Vaishnava, he brings to the interpretation of the Vaishnava literature of his country a fine enthusiasm and a sympathetic imagination. At the same time his imagination and sympathy are controlled by his historical sense..............Before the publication of Mr. Sen's work, the only way of getting anything like an adequate impression of the Vaishnava saint was by reading some of those prolix biographies written in old Bengali, such as the Chaitanya Charitamrita and the Chaitanya Bhagabat—a task from which most foreigners naturally shrank."

Let me now proceed to meet the arguments of my critics. Those who denounced the fifty pages of the Karchā as forged pointed out that it is mentioned in the Karchā that Chaitanya took a little food, at the house of Kashi Mitra, and hearing that the rice was called "Gopalbhog" (offerings to God) burst into tears. The critics say that after his Sanyasa, Chaitanya lived upon a little food, drawn by his nostrils and thus kept himself alive. I do not know where such a queer statement was ever found. Even in the Charitamrita, the accepted biography of the master, frequent references are to be found about his taking solid food in the usual manner.

The opponents would not believe in the statement of Govinda Das that when the latter was once attacked with a disease, Chaitanya gently touched his body with his hands to allay his pain. It is contended that it would be undignified on the part of such a divinity

as Chaitanya to offer this kind of service to a menial.

Objections have also been raised against the statement that Chaitanya, in his trance, took a harlot in his arms and asked her to recite the name of Hari. The passage is one of the most wonderful instances of his divine frenzy and felicitous spiritual emotion. It invests him with the full glory of a great saint. It is alleged that far from having talked with any woman Chaitanya never looked at the face of any, after his Sannyās. But in some of the biographies much esteemed by the orthodox Vaisnavas, there are occasional references to Chaitanya's talking with woman and even enjoying the sight of plays performed by the *seva dashis* of Puri. It will be seen from the account to be found in the Karchā that Chaitanya so far forgot himself in his trance and was so absolutely unconscious of everything outside, that he trampled the body of Tirtha Ram who had prostrated himself before him, under his feet. It was in such a condition that he had touched the harlot Satya's person with God's name on his lips.

In some points, the account given in the Chaitanya Charitamrita does not agree with that of the Karchā; so they hold the Karcha to be unreliable. But I consider the Karchā to be all the more reliable for it, having been written by an eye-witness. The Charitamrita was written 104 years after the Karchā. In a country like India, one knows full well what monstrous fables grow round a great apostle within a few years of his death. The Chaitanya Charitamrita does not agree with the Chaitanya Bhagavata also, in some points. But the opponents do not assail either of these authorities on that ground. But if there are matters in which the Karchā does not agree with the 'standard' biographies,

I for myself, would, even at the risk of incurring the umbrage of a section of the orthodox Vaishnavas, give credit to the Karchā, written, as it was, by a man on the spot, in preference to the later works, whatever sanctity they may carry in popular Vaishnava opinion.

Renowned men like late Babus Shishirkumar Ghose and Matilal Ghose had actually seen the old MS. of the Karchā and had stated their doubts about the authenticity of the first fifty pages only. But my opponents would now seek to denounce the whole book as unauthentic, by means of flimsy and puerile arguments.

Now it is quite true, and proved by various authorities that there were two manuscripts of the Karchā, the first one of which, counting from the present time, would be about 300 years old. The accounts given of the Deccan are so faithful and minute that it would be impossible for a man to give such detailed information of the various places without travelling the whole country himself. Can it be believed that at least 300 years ago a man having visited all the shrines of the Deccan, forged a story like that? The MS., it should be remembered, was 300 years old. There was no Survey map at the time to be of any help to him. A distinguished Bengalee wrote a history the other day, in which he incorporated the account of Chaitanya's travel in the Deccan from the Karchā. He was approached by my opponents with a request to expunge those passages from his book; they even agreed to bear the cost of recasting his book according to their suggestions. This, of course, the historian refused to do, stating that he would believe in the account of the Karchā. I have been receiving thundering letters, in which I am required to believe in nothing except what is stated in the Chaitanya Charitamrita. I will refer to one interesting

incident in this connection. Sometime ago, a Vaishnava was writing a book on the tour of Chaitanya in the southern countries. I chanced to see two or three forms of the book when it was in the press. There he was declaiming Govinda Das over the line, "It made even the piece of burnt wood, as he was, swell in great love" (প্রেমে যেন, পোড়া কাঠ ফুলিয়া উঠিল।) Govinda Das referred to a dark-coloured Sannyasi in the above line, but the writer fancied that he had thus insultingly referred to Chaitanya; so he indulged in long and atrocious vituperations against Govinda. When I pointed out his mistake the Vaishnava zealot had then to destroy the two forms, which he had already got printed.

Such has been the fate of Govinda Das at the hands of some of his countrymen professing the Vaishnava creed. But yet no dog was ever more attached to his master than was he to Chaitanya. I believe that it is not possible for any man of the present day to write a book like that. Its words are all inspired, as he was near the inspired presence of the great personality of a divine man. His work is being read with tears by hundreds of men, for there is the breath of fresh spiritual life blown over his sentences—the inspiration imbibed from the God-man of Nadia. For myself, I got the printed edition and used the materials available in it; and I will continue to believe that amongst the great biographies of Chaitanya, it is the greatest in respect of accuracy and wealth of historical details though the book is a small one and refers to a short period of the Master's life.

I believe, also, that the Sri Govinda of Chaitanya Charitamrita, who was a constant companion of the Master in his later life, is probably the same Govinda Das, for reasons stated in my work "Chaitanya and his Companions (pp. 236-37).

Govinda tried to hide his name and identity from the public for the obvious reason of saving himself from being discovered and caught hold of by his kinsmen, particularly by his wife, who was so anxious to get him back into the folds of family life once more ; hence his notes were concealed (করচা করিয়া রাখি অতি সঙ্গোপনে "I jot down the notes and keep them in great privacy "). It is for this reason that the Karchā was not widely known in those days. Its discovery would have frustrated the object of the writer's ascetic vow. Hence he did not give it out to the public. Krishna Das Kaviraj did not get it in his hands when he wrote a short account of Chaitanya's tour in the Deccan. Hence he has not mentioned Govinda's name. He has mentioned the name of Kala Krishna Das, whom, also, we find mentioned in the Karchā. The latter, for some reason or other, abandoned his travel, as appears to be the case from the account of the Karchā.

Govinda Karmakar, as a companion of Chaitanya, is, as we have stated before, mentioned in the Chaitanya Mangal of Jayananda, who being a contemporary of Chaitanya, was the better-informed man. Govinda, as the companion and attendant of Chaitanya in his travels in Southern India, has also been mentioned by the great poet Balaram Das of undisputed authority amongst the orthodox Vaishnavas (Gaura Pada Tarangini). There are also references to Govinda in the Chaitanya Bhagavata itself. In a book called the Chaitanya Chandroday Koumadi written by Prema Das in the seventeenth century there is a clear reference to Govinda Das when he was on his way to Santipur. It should be remembered that the Karchā towards its close, refers to Govinda's trip to Santipur. One may trace the whole of the later career of Govinda Das in the Chaitanya Charitamrita

when, according to our opinion, he is said to have appeared as Sri Govinda in the guise of a quondam servant of Ishwar Puri. I am shortly going to give a full history of Govinda Das in my Introduction to a new edition of the Karchā which I have proposed to edit and publish.

One of the allegations against the Karchā has been that some months after the Sannyās, Chaitanya is described as having worn matted locks on his head. His head was clean-shaved at the time of Sannyās, so how could he get matted locks within five or six months from the time? The custom of wearing artificial matted locks on the eve of a long journey is prevalent amongst the Sannyasis, for the purpose of protecting their heads from exposure. The custom is of a hoary antiquity and I may refer my readers to a text from the Ramayana of Valmiki,

"एवमस्तु गमिष्यामि वनं वस्तुमहं त्वितः।
जटाजिनधरो राज्ञः प्रतिज्ञामनुपालयन्॥"

(Let it be so. For the fulfilment of the king's vow, I shall depart hence wearing matted locks and bark-garments, to dwell in the forest.)

The MS. was an old one, and it was difficult to grasp the readings in some places. The veteran Pandits and *gurus*, Jaygopal Goswami and Madan Gopal Goswami deciphered the letters, where they presented any difficulty, with great care. It should be stated here that the Pandits of the old school, while editing these poems, are found here and there, to substitute simple words in places of archaic and antiquated forms, such for instance, as করিয়া for করিঞা, হইয়া for হইঞা, etc. Such small changes must have been effected by the editor. But the simplicity of the language is not always a test for judging

the age of a poem. That the Karchā is replete with many old and archaic forms may be observed from such phrases as "ভোগ লাগাইল" পাড়ু, নিয়ড়ে, পেখিয়া, ফুকরায়, পাকাড়ি, ঝাঁকি দিতে, etc. Rabindra Nath and Madhusudan were almost contemporaries, but the language of the two shows such a vast difference that they seem to belong to widely different ages. Chandi Das's more familiar poems are much simpler in language than the Karchā, though the former is more than a hundred years older than the latter.[1] The fact is that when a man writes without being actuated by pedantry but by a real craving for expressing an idea, he is generally found to be simple and unpretentious. The Ramayana of Valmiki is for this reason, much simpler than the classical poems of a much later age. The great mistake of these Vaisnabs has been that they have accepted Chaitanya Charitamrita not only as a standard work in regard to all historical information about Chaitanya but as the criterion of language by which to judge of the period in which other books were written. It is no doubt a monumental work on Vaisnab theology, but it is an impenetrable

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[1] *Cf.* Chandidas—(*a*) "দুঃখিনীর দিন দুঃখেতে গেল।
তুমি ত মথুরায় ছিলে হে ভাল॥
এতেক সহিল অবলা ব'লে।
ফাটিয়া যাইত পাষাণ হ'লে॥"

(*b*) "সই কে বলে পীরিতি ভাল,
হাসিয়া হাসিয়া পীরিতি করিয়া, কাঁদিয়া জনম গেল।
কুলবতী হৈয়া, কুলে দাঁড়াইয়া, যে ধনি পীরিতি করে।
তুষের আগুন, যেন জ্বালাইয়া, আপনি পুড়িয়া মরে।"

(*c*) " সখি কেবা শুনাইল শ্যাম নাম।
কাণের ভিতর দিয়া, মরমে পশিল গো,
আকুল করিল মোর প্রাণ "

forest of legends which the historian should approach with great caution for ascertaining historical facts, while as a model of linguistic style it should no more be called Bengali than Hindi. The author Krishna Das Kaviraj had lived at Brindaban from his seventeenth till ninty-third year, so that his Bengali had got seriously entangled with Hindi. It will therefore be absurd to suppose that because the book was written in the 17th century, its style is therefore the right specimen of Bengali style of that period. My orthodox Vaisnab brethren will not be credited for holding the Chaitanya Charitamrita to be the source from which emanates all light to clear up historical and linguistic problems of Bengal. We revere the book as a great scripture of the Bengali Vaisnavas but we shall not discredit the Karchā when it disagrees with the Charitamrita. Aware of this fact, my opponents are bent upon altogether demolishing the Karchā, alleging it to be a piece of literary forgery.

Pandit Jaygopal Goswami is now dead. His eldest son, Pandit Banwari Lal Goswami is now one of the most revered names amongst the Goswamis of Santipur. He is about seventy years of age and is a renowned Bengali poet himself. His Khichuri, Polao, and other poems have won for him an abiding reputation in our literature. I requested him sometime ago to give me a history of the MS. from which the printed edition of the Karchā was taken by his scholarly father. I have the highest regard for Banwari Lal Goswami as a man. He has given me the following account, which will show the entire facts of the case and which may be accepted as a true and accurate statement.

"Fifty years ago, Babu Kalidas Nath, the writer of a biographical account of the poet Jagadananda, brought several old manuscripts to my father. One of these

manuscripts was a Karchā by Govinda Das, another a life of Advaita and the rest were old works on Vaishnavism. My father borrowed the Karchā and the life of Advaita from Kalidas Nath for a perusal. He felt these two works to be of great spiritual merit and set about copying them. My revered father used to write a very quick hand, so that in a few days, he finished a copy of the Karchā.

"There were many errors in the Karchā and in some places the manuscript was worm-eaten. Pandit Madan Gopal Goswami rendered considerable assistance in deciphering the reading of the text. Eight or nine years later, the Karchā appeared in print, when I showed a portion of the same and the life of Advaita-charyya to my talented friend, Babu Akshaychandra Sarkar. Babu Akshaychandra reviewed the Advaita Mangal by Haricharan in three successive issues of the 'Sadharani,' and felt much interest and was greatly delighted in going through a portion of the Karchā as well.

"Father had given a few pages of the old MS. of the Karchā to Sisir Babu for his perusal and Sisir Babu, again, lent them to Dr. Sambhu Ch. Mookerjee from whose custody, somehow or other, these pages were lost.

"It was at considerable pains that the lost treasure could at last be recovered. Copies of some portions of the two lost forms had been preserved ; and fortunately enough a second MS. of the book was obtained from Late Hari Nath Goswami, and thus the Karchā was finally recovered... My esteemed father was well-known all over the Vaishnava world. There may be trivial points of disparity between the Chaitanya of Charitamrita and the Chaitanya described in the Karchā. But is it not known to

the controversialists that Pandit Jay Gopal and Madan Gopal had, so to speak, churned the very ocean of the Vaishnava lore? They were approached by a good number of scholars for the interpretation of the Ananda Vrindaban Champu and the elucidation of the knotty texts of the Bhagavata. Every work has its peculiar merits; the beauty of the Karchā lies in its charming simplicity. The readers of this work must, one and all, have to admit that it emanated from the pen of a truly devoted soul, resembling, as it does, in clearness and sanctity the sacred streams of the Gomukhi."[1]

We refrain from quoting Sj. Banwari Lal's letter in full. Evidently the audacious attempts on the part of the biassed section of the orthodox Vaishnavas, to cast a slur on my humble literary works, and what is worse still, on the honesty of his venerable father, the late lamented Pandit Jay Gopal Goswami, have aroused the righteous indignation of Pandit Banwari Lal, who has given free vent to his Brahmanic ire in his long letter to me. But I am not going to quote the letter in full.

The Forward, in its issue of the 25th January, 1925, published a long article which took nearly two columns of the paper. The writer sighs over the lack of all historical sense of our countrymen. Orthodox religious sentiments have always stood in the way of faithfully recording all historical narratives in India. He has clearly shown how ignorance and belief in the supernatural have been great enemies to historical research in this country. There are orthodox men in the country who will try their level best to thwart

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[1] Translated from Bengali.

all historical purpose and persuade their well-to-do disciples to open their purse liberally in paying for organisations started in defence of their "religious cause."

Happily, the number of those who are denouncing this great work is very small. A large number of orthodox Vaishnavas themselves, with open mind, believe in its genuineness. I have referred to the fact that Babu Sisirkumar Ghose, with whom the old manuscript had been lying for a time, used its materials in his 'Amiya Nimai Charit.' Babu Rakhaldas Banerjee in his history of Bengal, has drawn largely from this work in preparing his sketch of Chaitanya. Babu Achyuta Charan Tattwanidhi, the famous litterateur, whom the Government of Assam has rewarded with a literary pension, wrote to me to say that he believed the Karchā to be a genuine work. His opinion was quoted by me in the first edition of my Banga Bhasha O Sahitya. Late Babu Haradhan Datta Bhaktinidhi, whose scholarship in Vaishnava literature was unique and wonderful, took a great help from the Karchā in his valuable contributions to the leading Bengali journals of his time. Pt. Jyotiprakasa Bhagavatbhusan has written a long article refuting the flimsy arguments of the enemies of the Karchā. Babu Jagat Bandhu Bhadra, a devout Vaishnava scholar used the materials of the Karchā in the Introduction to his famous "Gour Pada Tarangini." Babu Manamohan Chakrabarty, the distinguished antiquarian of Bengal, has believed in the genuineness of the Karchā.

One of the more important reasons, which, however, the adverse critics dare not express, for their calling in question the authenticity of the Karchā, is the fact that Chaitanya is represented therein as paying his respects

before all the temples in Southern India, whether it was Saiva or Sakta. He was a divine man, who cared for God and not for any sect. It would indeed be a pity if he had entertained narrow sectarian views.

The letter of the venerable Pandit Banwari Lal Goswami is sufficient to show the full history of the case and we need hardly say anything more in defence of the Karchā.

I have explained the reason why Govinda Das should have himself tried to suppress the Karchā. It was a fear of being detected by his kith and kin that made him keep these notes in strict privacy. It was also because he wanted to serve the Master in disguise in his later career. After Chaitanya's disappearance from the world, a theological school was started with the avowed object of making Chaitanya an incarnation of Krishna. Those writers who would not conform to this propaganda, received little esteem from the Vaisnab community. Whatever incredible legends might be recorded by a biographer, it did not stand in the way of his book being welcomed by the orthodox Vaisnabs provided Chaitanya was deified, and the attributes of Krishna ascribed to him. But any book not conforming to this essential doctrine was not held as reliable whatever genuine merit it might possess from the historical point of view.

While writing this, I have just received letters from three eminent men, two of whom saw the old MS. of the Karchā themselves. One is Rai Saratchandra Chatterjee Bahadur, Government Pleader of Rungpur (brother of Sir Atulchandra Chatterjee, I.C.S., High Commissioner). He says "I knew Pandit Joygopal Goswami rather intimately in my young days, when I had the honour and privilege of enjoying his confidence too. *I then saw an old MS. of Govinda Das's Karchā*, which he was

then engaged in making a copy of, for the purpose of editing and publishing it. It is now over 40 years that I saw it with him." Pandit Laksminarayan Tarkaratna of Bakla, now residing in the District of Rangpur, an aged scholar of great repute, also writes to say that some 40 or 45 years ago he saw "*a very old and warm-eaten MS. of the Karchā*" which Babu Gorachand Chakrabarty was copying at the bidding of Pundit Joygopal Goswami at Hughlee. Pundit Laksminarayan adds that he was consulted by the copyist wherever any difficulty presented itself in deciphering the letters of the text, he was thus thoroughly acquainted with the book and when it was published 10 or 15 years later, he found the publication true to the original. Mr. Nalinimohan Sanyal, M.A., retired Inspector of Schools, Rajshahi Division, an inhabitant of Santipur—the native village of Pundit Joygopal Goswami—and now 64 years of age, refutes some of the charges brought against the editor of the Karchā in a letter to me and says "I believe the Karchā published by Pundit Joygopal Goswami to be a genuine historical work of great merit."

In the face of these overwhelming evidences, I need not take further pains to prove the genuineness of the Karchā. I only wish to add that even if no external proofs would be forthcoming, a careful, reader would, still be convinced of the genuine character of this great work of Govinda Das by the rich array of the details it gives of Chaitanya's career for two years, and the freshness of firsthand information breathed throughout the book, which present a striking contrast to the somewhat legendary and conventional character of some of the more voluminous biographies of Chaitanya, in spite of their many high qualifications.[1]

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[1] Reprinted from the Calcutta Review of March 1925, with some additions and changes.

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OPINIONS

ON

THE EASTERN BENGAL BALLADS

WITH A FOREWARD BY THE RIGHT HON'BLE LAWRENCE JOHN LUMLEY DUNDAS, EARL OF ROANLDSHAY.

From a Review in the Oriental List, London (Jan.–March, 1924).

"*Eastern Bengal Ballads: Mymensingh*: Ramtanu Lahiri Research Fellowship Lectures for 1922-24 in two parts.

In these two volumes Dr. Dineshchandra Sen has for the first time made available, both for English and for Bengali readers, ten typical ballads (gathas) sung by professional minstrels in the district of Mymensingh. The words of the ballads have been taken down in writing from the lips of those who sing them by one Chandrakumar De, who has travelled into many out-of-the-way places in East Bengal for this purpose. It was an extremely difficult task to which he set himself; he often found the professional singers whom he approached unwilling to disclose to a stranger the text of these songs, which had been handed to them as a private family possession; to recover the whole of a ballad he often had to make special journeys to several different places and to consult a number of different singers; and throughout his work he was handicapped by ill-health. It is to be hoped that the collaboration between him and Dr. Sen will continue and result in the preservation of many more of these ballads, which are of immense value both to the student of folk-lore and to the philologist.

The ballads mostly date from the 16th and 17th centuries, and throw a flood of light on the social, religious and political condition of Eastern Bengal in those days. The first volume (Vol. I, Part I) contains a valuable introduction by Dr. Sen, and an English translation (or more strictly a paraphrase) of the ten ballads. There is also a separate introduction to each ballad. The second volume (Vol. I, Part II) contains a Bengali introduction, the full Bengali text of each ballad, and a number of footnotes explaining obsolete words and provincialisms. There are eleven illustrations, and a literary map of Eastern Mymensingh. Embodied in some of the ballads are several interesting specimens of 'baramasi' poems—poems describing the twelve months of the year in relation to the experiences of the hero and heroine of the poem. The language throughout is the common village speech of the Mymensingh district, and is in delightful contrast to the artificial style of such writers as Bharatchandra, with its far-fetched conceits and high-sounding Sanskrit expressions.

Great as Dr. Sen's other services to the cause of Bengali literature have been, it is doubtful whether any of his previous work is a more valuable contribution to our knowledge of Bengali life and thought than this collection of ballads, which, but for his enterprise and the praiseworthy efforts of his collaborator, would in all probability in the course of the next few years, have been lost beyond recovery.

From a review in the Times Literary Supplement of 7th August, 1924.

A writer needs more than merit in himself if his work is to attract wide notice; his subject-matter must have a quality of general appeal. Probably no scholar alive in India to-day has such a record as Dr. Dineschandra Sen, a record of patient, enthusiastic pioneer research, whose results have been valuable and full of interest. Fifty years ago, very little was known, even by Bengalis, of old Bengali literature, and if such ignorance no longer prevails to-day, it is largely because of one man who, in spite of poverty and obscure beginnings and ill-health, has toiled through many years to bring his own land's history and literature to light. His journeyings should become a legend, and the Bengali imagination, centuries hence, should see one figure eternally traversing the Gangetic plain, now beaten upon by the fierce sun as he makes his way across the red, deeply fissured fields of Vishnupur, now floating on the rain-swept rivers of East Bengal. He has coaxed a cautious peasantry into opening their store of traditions and memories, and he has persuaded them to part with hundreds of old manuscripts that were stuffed into palm-leaf roofs or between bamboo rafters. If he has not made a nation's ballads he has discovered a great many of them. If a small part of this service had been rendered to a better-known literature it would have made him famous. But Bengal is popularly supposed to have had no history; and it has certainly been without the dramatic or catastrophic events which strike the imagination in the story of many lands. Plassey, despite Nabin Sen's song of lament over it, was not a disaster to Bengali arms though fought in Bengal. Agra and Lahore, Delhi and Seringapatam, evoke more romantic associations than Dacca or Murshidabad. Aurangzeb and Akbar, Pratap Singh and Tipu Sultan, mean a good deal even to a European; but Lakshman Sen and Hambir Singh mean nothing at all.

Yet the records brought to light by Dr. Sen concern a population of fifty millionns, who speak as expressive and beautiful a language as there is anywhere in India, and whose literature is a thing that Indians outside Bengal regard with pride, as an enrichment of their common heritage. That literature has been flowering with amazing exuberance for nearly a century now; and as the Bengali mind grows in consciousness of itself and its achievement, it must increasingly be interested in the beginnings of that achievement. In his latest book, Dr. Sen has reclaimed a whole province for scholarship and study, the ballads of the Mymensingh borderland. As we know, a debatable land, where races and interests meet and sometimes clash, has a vivid life which often takes on spontaneous and vigorous expression. And the Mymensingh swamps and spreading rivers, a refuge to fugitive kings and struggling independences, a region where Bengal and Assam, Aryan and Mongolian meet and merge, have sheltered through the centuries much more than moving and beautiful stories. A great deal of Bengal's forgotten and neglected history lies hidden in these ballads.

In his introduction Dr. Sen tells how his notice was first drawn to the ballads. Nearly a dozen years ago he was interested by articles in an obscure and local Magazine, and on inquiry found that they were by one Chandra Kumar De, a young man of no English education, in frail health and wretchedly poor. He had been employed by a village grocer, on a salary of one rupee (sixteen pence) a month, "but was dismissed on the plea of incompetence and inattention." Probably the employer had reason for his action, for the boy was dreaming of his own country and her past. He got new work, this time munificently paid by two rupees a month, the work of a rent-collector; he had to travel widely, and during his travels heard the old ballads. Dr. Sen persuaded Calcutta University to employ him; and by an expenditure of fifty rupees a month for three years over 17,000 lines of Old Bengali poetry have been recovered. Dr. Sen exultantly remarks:

"I would not have been more pleased if these lines were all gold. The songs perfectly artless, written mostly by Hindu and Muhammadan peasants, often show the real heart of poetry, and some of them at least, I believe, will rank next only to the most beautiful of the Vaisnava songs in our literature."

He has found European scholars who share his enthusiasm. If other friends, both in England and Bengal, renew the charge that his enthusiasm for what is old is often like the uncritical joy of a man madly in love, he is unmoved. The charge is familiar to him, and he puts it by with a smile. The mass of work that he has now brought forward is too large for hasty assessment, and even on a first view much of it is manifestly poorer than he thinks it. But among these ballads are some tales so simple and appealing that they need only a more cunning literary presentation to win recognition outside Bengal. And Dr. Sen, throughout his long and successful career as discoverer, has never done his land greater service than by saving these stories that would so soon have faded out from the world.

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Paris, 10th April, 1924.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am sorry I could not answer earlier your lovely letter, dated 10th January, 1924. I am growing more and more busy day by day since my coming back home. Still I cherished the hope of reading all your Ballads before writing you, and I kept them faithfully on my desk all the time. But I had to content myself with the first one and with your learned Introduction. To-day I am on the eve of Easter vacations, and I am confident I can now make time to enjoy a full reading of your delectable work. But I have read enough of it to anticipate the pleasure I can derive from it. Your enthusiasm at the discovery was fully justified. Your Eastern Bengal, you are so proud of, is positively an earthly replica of India's *Nandan*, a paradise of vegetation, sky, running water, a sporting place of Apsarases and Gandharvas, and you are another Narada coming to the world to repose above these celestial beauties, and in a way how attractive! This is the wonder of art that, owing

to you, I could in the sad, dull, dim days of winter dream of a blue sky, of lovely rivers, of evergreen woods, of couples of lovers wandering amidst the wild beasts, indifferent to all dangers, raptured by their mutual love.

There is one dark side, the news you give me about your bad health. It may be that after such an unceasing strain of labour you had to suffer from a nervous depression. Even before I could meet you, I could guess that you are working in a constant strain of imagination and passion which overtaxes your bodily strength. I know that no sacrifice is of account to you for the love of your country. But India has not such a plenty of worthy worshippers that the loss of one of them may be indifferent. The work that you can do no one else can do or will do. Think of it and keep yourself ready for more work. This is a friend's wish and prayer.

But do not miss to send me a word that you are feeling better, and stronger, that you are recovering after this tremendous shock.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Ever yours,

SYLVAIN LEVI.

DEAR SIR,

Thank you very much for your kindness in sending me the first volume of your Mymensingh Ballads. My sister and myself (she is my interpreter in English) have read it with great interest. The subject it deals with touches all mankind; the differences with European stories are due to reasons which are much more social than racial. The good æsthetic taste that is felt in most of these ballads is also one of the characteristics of popular imagination in many of our Western countries: "Womeder Wehmuth" as a beautiful song of Goethe's, put into music by Beethoven, expresses it "The Pleasure of Tears."

It is true that with us French people, the people of Gaul, it reacts against this with our bold and boisterous joyful legends. Is there none of this kind of thing in Indian literature? I was specially delighted with the touching story of Madina which although only two centuries old, is an antique beauty and a purity of sentiment which art has rendered faithfully without changing it. Chandravati is a very noble story and Mahua, Kanka and Lila are charming (to mention only these ones).

The patient researches of Mr. Chandra Kumar De and your precious collaboration with him have brought to the historical science a valuable contribution to its efforts to solve the problems of popular literary creations. From where have these great primitive epics and ballads come? It seems very likely that they have always come from some poetic genius whose invention has struck the popular imagination. But the question is how much people deform his idea in putting it into the shape in which we find it? Which is the part of the collaboration of the multitude in this work of re-casting, which is continuous and spontaneous? Rarely has any one had the happy opportunity to seize an epic as one might say on the lips of the people who have given birth to it before writing had fixed it in some shape as

you and Mr. Chandra Kumar have succeeded in doing in this case. I congratulate you sincerely for this beautiful work and I ask you, dear Sir, to believe in my high esteem and admiration.*

4th March, 1924. ROMAIN ROLLAND.

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From a review by Mr. F. E. Oaten, LL.B., M.A., published in the *Englishman*, dated the 7th of February, 1924.

It is not easy for an Englishman to hazard an opinion as to the reception which the ballad poetry of Eastern Bengal, recently rescued from oblivion by Dr. Sen, and now given by him to the world in the form of an English translation, will receive at the hands of literary Bengal. But one thing is certain. The measure of Bengal's appreciation of these ballads, not as mere historical or literary curiosities, but as living literature, will be some index of the extent to which her spirit is escaping from the trammels of artificiality in its effort to express itself not only in literature but in life. To the western critic, stumbling by good fortune upon Dr. Sen's Book, these ballads, straight from the unsophisticated people's heart, come fresh and stimulant as the breeze that revives the jaded traveller from Calcutta as he sits in steamer and ploughs across the monsoon gusts of Eastern Bengal. In them we escape, as regards the subject-matter almost entirely from the priest, as regards language, entirely from cultured artificiality, and as regards the most universal of human passions, altogether from that ideal of chastity which caused a poet of an earlier age to place the following words in the mouth of Sita, as a defence to her character: 'Even when I was a mere child, I never came too close to a male play-fellow."

In the introduction which Dr. Sen prefixes to his translation, we learn that these ballads cover a period of 300 years from the sixteenth century onward, that they were known only and that orally only, solely to the class, rapidly decreasing, of professional village-singers or rhapsodists ; and that he collected the ballads through the agency of a poverty-stricken and uneducated literary enthusiast, named Chandra Kumar De, to whom the real credit for first bringing these ballads to literary notice must be ascribed, though Dr. Sen's work in introducing them to a wider literary world, and inspiring the discovery of others, has been infinitely valuable.

Briefly stated, these ballads contain a picture of the state of society and the conditions of life, prevailing in Eastern Mymensing in the 16th century and onward. The area in which the ballads rose and flourished was one into which the Sen Rajas with the Brahminic canons and arbitrary conventions were unable to penetrate; it was therefore for generations ruled by a different society and a different standard of moral and communal life ; its culture was indigenous, natural, fresh, unartificial, in short, true original Bengali. It was a society not of dogmas, but of real life.

* Translated from French by Captain J. W. Petavel.

There are a dozen aspects from which these ballads, thus redeemed from rapidly approaching oblivion, are important. Lord Ronaldshay in his introduction emphasises their importance as the seed from which modern Bengali has sprung. They will certainly also prove valuable as a source of historical information. But one cannot but dwell here on their intrinsic value as literature, since it is to be hoped th t Bengal will eventually value them most as such. As Dr. Sen writes, "these songs have features in them which have a universal appeal." Their language is that of a despised "patois," they describe Bengali men and women acting in ways that are not now conventional and are in some cases regarded as immoral; but they describe the great human passions, and chiefly the passions of love, working in social conditions that were, as compared with conditions to-day, strangely unrestricted by conventions. In these ballads women fall in love, and in no case blindly follow the selection of the guardian. They go through fire and water for the sake of the man they choose. They devise stratagems and slay his foes. They converse with strange youngmen at the ghat and arrange future meetings. They receive love-letters. Yet ever they prefer death to dishonour, properly so regarded. Malua's scorn of the Kazi's overtures to her through a go-between, in her husband's absence, is characteristic. "The wicked Kazi has not the worth of my husband's toe. Take this insult from me and go to your Kazi and tell him all. I take him to be my foe and hold him as a dog. I hit his face with a broom from here."

In fact it may be said that woman, the Bengali woman, is the general hero of these ballads, so far as those hitherto published are concerned. By the side of her devotion, heroism and self-renunciation, the male characters are sometimes poor creatures, devoid of personality. In Mahua, Malua, Sunai and several others, not solely Hindu, the literature of Bengal receives on its roll many names of which it may be proud. It is therefore distressing to learn from Dr. Sen that these songs are losing public favour every day, Bengal needs these literary heroines, even though, or even possibly because their conventions are not those of to-day. Possibly Dr. Sen's book, and especially his enthusiastic and triumphant introduction to them, will restore them to public favour, and give them wider currency. It is clear at least from Dr. Sen's enthusiasm for the uncoventionality of the characters of the ballads, that it is not without meaning that he prefaces to his book the quotation that "if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation."

Lord Ronaldshay in an article entitled "What is it Nationalist India wants" published in "the Nineteenth Century and After" (July 1924) refers to Dr. Dineshchandra Sen's, "Eastern Bengal Ballads" in terms of high praise, with copious extracts from the book.

From a review by Mr. F. E. Pargiter, (I.C.S. retired) in the Royal Asiatic Society's Journal (October, 1924):

Songs and ballads have been handed down orally and recited among the peasantry in the district of Mymensingh in North-East Bengal, and Chandra Kumar De, a poor man who had been fascinated by them during his local visits as rent-collector, began writing about them in the local Journal *Sourabha* in 1912. His notices attracted Dr. Dineshchandra Sen, who then helped him and engaged him in 1919

D recover all the ballads that could be discovered there. This was done, often with great difficulty, because reciters did not always know the whole of a ballad, so that the portions were discovered piecemeal and sometimes confusedly. Dr. Sen has now edited ten ballads as a first instalment in this work, the ballads (Maimansinh Gītikā) in Pt. II and English translations in Pt. I.

The Bengali of the ballads is the peculiar dialect of East Bengal, which differs from that of Calcutta in various respects, and is of real interest and value in phonology and vocabulary, as the reviewer can vouch from personal knowledge, some results of which are shown in his *Vocabulary of Peculiar Vernacular Bengali Works*, publishedl by the Bengal Asiatic Society. The English version is not a close translation, but a free rendering which gives the matter and spirit of the original. The ballads belong to the last three or four centuries The dramat is personæ are Hindu and Mohammedan, chiefly Hindu yet not Hindu of the orthodox type, for the conditions are those of freer country life, and youth and maiden meet in true love episodes. The stories are charming, both happy and tragic, and are told generally in simple language, fresh with country scenes and feelings, and illustrated with pretty sketches by a Bengali artist. The characters are finely and often nobly delineated, and the heroines display the highest ideals of Bengali womanhood. Dr. Sen has discussed each ballad in a preface, and has prefixed to the whole a long introduction investigating their origin, variety, nature, recitation and value, and the political condition of that district The ballads should stimulate interest among students of Bengali, and the English version will charm all readers.

F. E. Pargiter